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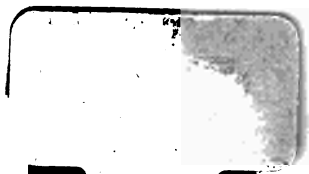
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# A Florentine Cycle and Other Poems

Gertrude Huntington M<sup>c</sup>Giffert



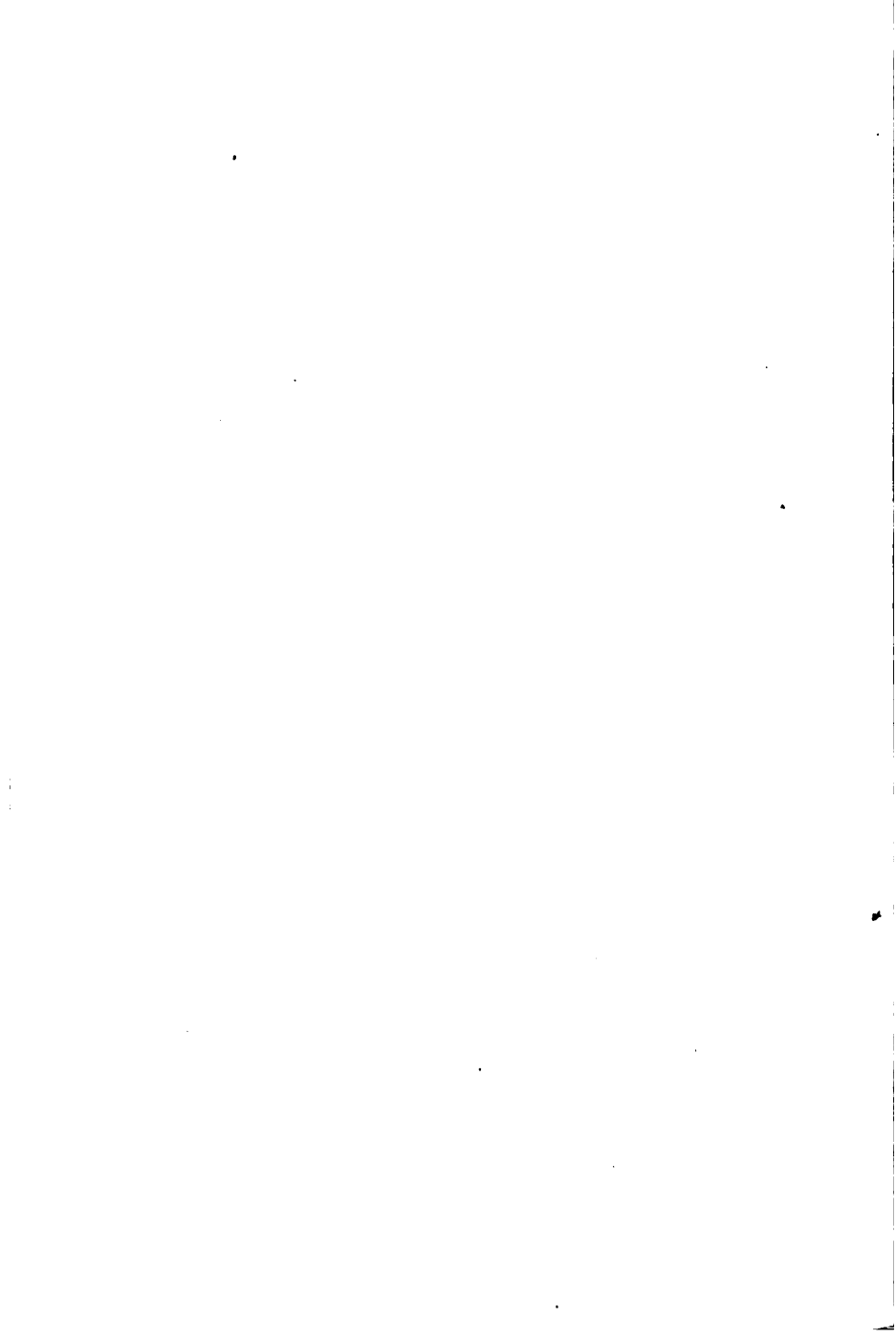


McGiff

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# **A Florentine Cycle**

## **And Other Poems**

**By**

**Gertrude Huntington McGiffert**

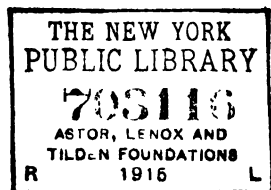
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GERTRUDE HUNTINGTON MCGIFFERT

ROY VAN  
ALLEN  
VAN ALLEN

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To  
A. C. M.

These slight sketches, Dearest,  
Are for you.  
You will know their value,  
False or true.

No stroke mine to chisel  
Titan days;  
No voice mine to give life  
Splendid praise.

Just a scant, sharp outline  
For the street  
We to heaven climbed with  
Daring feet.

Hint of hues that haply  
Love will see,  
Forms beloved, a goodly  
Company.

What bright colours souls are  
In love's light!  
Strange their shining shadows  
In the night.

Here life's sun-flecked landscape,  
There the shade;  
But we went together  
Unafraid.

Oft my vision holden,  
In your gaze  
I have seen far Beauty's  
Wonderways.

So because I love you,  
I have kept  
Home-clad, glad-eyed memories,  
Some that wept.

And I put them, Dearest,  
In your hand;  
You will know their meaning,  
Understand.

Autman 20 May 2/15.

ROY WING  
CLUB  
YACHT

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# **A Florentine Cycle**



# A Florentine Cycle

"Here you see, as in a glass,  
Death and Florence grip and pass."

## I

### OUT OF THE DARKNESS

EMERGES Florence, with earth-smell of death  
Upon her; child of rock with torch of fire,  
Sired by Caesar, bred by legend, led  
By a divine desire.

'Twixt grappling dragon's claw, bold eagle's  
beak,  
From hill to hill her most proud story lies  
Writ red in blood; for every stone a life  
To heaven dumbly cries.

Black anger—man's first passion—shakes itself  
From Badia to Sant' Apostoli.  
Buondelmonti slain, Mars' winds are sown,  
Whirlwinds of destiny.

Leviathan, fierce tower devours tower,  
Feud burns out feud, hate-urged the borders  
spread;  
Small wonder Cavalcanti questioned God  
Among the crowding dead.

Rich grows the drenched, fermented, furrowed  
soil,  
By bursting seeds of fate bewitched and torn.  
Horizons smoulder, widen, strange lights flash  
Prophetic of the morn.

## II

## THE CITY OF FLOWERS

BLOOMS the Duomo, lustrous, exquisite,  
A precious thing by which to measure art;  
Like to a jewel box, without, within,  
It holds Firenze's heart.

In an unrivaled era, beauty born  
Of force, a floating, daring globe of light,  
Pierce Brunelleschi's golden dome swells out  
O'er shining marble height.

Brims Giotto's soaring soul, a cleaving dream  
By fiery genius traced, transfixed on high,  
Light as a wingéd arrow poised to pierce  
The target of the sky.

In San Giovanni—Mars' most beauteous,  
Most noble temple—swings Ghiberti's door,  
Fit gate for Paradise, to welcome babes  
To Jesu evermore.

Comes forth the Santa Croce, symbol meet  
Of him who taught obedience, chastity,  
Implanted like a mighty conscience, peace  
It speaks and charity.

Structure by structure rears—Art come to  
birth—  
Santa Maria Novella, as to say  
Faith hath a body visible and fair  
Which bides unto this day.

Or San Michele, Santa Trinità,  
San Spirito—comely the city grows—  
The Orti Gardens, ways to wander in  
Wise Machiavelli knows.

Porta San Giorgio and that most sweet place,  
The Boboli o'er Ponte Vecchio—  
Dream-names to conjure with—our footsteps  
tempt  
What way the heart would go.

The Via delle Belle Donne leads  
To Spanish Chapel, from whose glowing wall  
Martini's shining saints lean out to us  
And benedictions fall.

Sweet lilies for Annunziata's saints  
Come through our Lady's Gate, and oft go out  
Strange whispers of Podesta's torture-vaults,  
Mad civic joust and rout.



## III

## THE PALAZZO VECCHIO

WAR-PLEDGED, the young Palazzo springs to  
arms,

Finger to stars to greet the centuries;  
Child of the past, with eager face and brave  
It meets its destinies.

Grim ward it keeps o'er trampled traitor hearths.  
For conquering Ghibellines its ramparts frown  
Upon the quelled Uberti, burgher-banned  
Usurpers of the town.

Proudly, amid its circling cypress hills,  
Beneath San Miniato's sunset care,  
It mocks obsequious ages as they pass  
In revelry or prayer.

A Master Fortress! Still old glories cling,  
Old pangs, old perils, blasphemies of war—  
Were blood to bloom, the Arno's banks had  
flowered  
With poppies evermore.

Lord of its ilex-blurred Etruscan vales,  
Fiesole's and Bellosguardo's haze,  
Lord of its dewy hedges, distant Alps,  
Its flowering garden ways,

Il Bel Palazzo stands, the city's heart  
Of hearts; bruised oft when naked hatreds bled,  
Austere when hoarsely Vacca called to arms,  
And gray with the dust of its dead.

IV

"BY THAT WAY PASS THE GODS"

GRAVE Dante loved it, watched it as 'twas built,  
In exile longed for it with yearning eyes;  
Its portals are immortal in his heart  
E'en now in Paradise.

Oft Petrarch, pausing in its shadow, heard  
Ethereal cadences—we hear them yet!  
Boccaccio's lute as Fiammetta passed  
Do listening worlds forget?

Proud Cimabue's famed Madonna borne  
With lighted candles, trumpets, pageantry,  
With bells and banners, passed beneath its  
walls—  
Herald and prophecy;

And Beatrice crowned with roses, bright  
With light from inmost heaven softly shed;  
And vivid Simonetta, prone, aloof,  
And smiling, being dead.

Make way! Lorenzo the Magnificent!  
Black Brothers of the Misericordia pass  
To San Lorenz with dirge and crucifix  
And solemn requiem mass.

The Vecchio knew its own—O halcyon days  
Of idyls, lauds, of madrigals and masques!  
When Ariosto spun his elegies,  
Pulci his arabesques;

When gay Poliziano wove his pearls,  
Ballads of flowers, rispetti light as foam,  
His lyric dainties, liquid honies culled  
From perfumed days of Rome.

Wide swung the Vecchio's doors—Great Tom  
strode through  
Seeking patricians, austere saints to be,  
Nor Keats-like knew he turned Art's tide and  
drew  
The world to Carmine.

Gaily the guileless Della Robbias sketched  
Upon its steps their childish groups at play.  
By Neptune yet Fra Lippi's classic saints  
And fair Madonnas stray.

Oft Donatello heard its midnight bells,  
Hot genius lashed, commanded aching brain—  
Saint George, Saint Mark, the Baptist!  
Christianized,  
Greek candour bloomed again.

Judith! Holfernes! On the Loggia? Hush!  
The people placed them so, as it would gaze  
Upon its own incarnate tiger-moods,  
    Its own fierce secret ways.

Here came sweet Fra Angelico with eyes  
Upon the mid-May heavens, seeking there  
Celestial tints for holy reveries  
    Vouchsafed to him in prayer;

Visions of lovely faces, tier on tier  
Of rapt adoring seraphs, choirs that sing,  
The throned Madonna and the pale scourged  
    Christ,  
    Bright angels, wing on wing.

And Sandro of the painted poesy,  
Of gorgeous, mystical imagining,  
Who Venus brought to earth, a second birth,  
    A later, lovelier Spring;

Who for delight portrayed the sculptural days,  
Fixed hue of symbol, form of ecstasy,  
From myth and holy legend drew bright strands  
    For cherished phantasy;

Painter of glamour, fragile flower-moods,  
Painter of dreams, the lure in maidens' eyes,  
Lover of spells, and wonderlands of souls,  
    Remote in Paradise.

Against the background of Gozzoli's heart—  
San Gimignano's rain-cut hills, its trees—  
Firenze's pageants climbed angelic heights  
By Art's sweet alchemies.

Wise Raphael, the ever young, whose thoughts  
Hang on world-walls, learned here himself to be.  
So simple greatness, daring to attain,  
Wins immortality.

Del Sarto's harassed spirit shouldered free  
From mire and muck, caught spark of Heaven's  
fire,  
Kindled his dead heart's fuel, burned its way  
To Art's dust-hid desire.

In fellowship proud Ghirlandajo with  
Verrocchio passed, comparing warily  
Largess of favor, Medicean smiles,  
In careful rivalry.

Magniloquent, Cellini swaggered in  
To gloat unshamed upon his shards of pride,  
His piquant prodigies, his miracles,  
His Perseus glorified.

Savonarola bore the Vecchio brand.  
Imprisoned, tortured, fainting in its tower,  
He heard his people, loosened hounds of God,  
Baying his last swift hour.

## A Florentine Cycle

11

And there where vanities flared high to heaven  
His funeral pyre was lit by torch of shame.  
Yet blazed across the blackened centuries  
His name is writ in flame.

And ever after Bartolommeo saw  
On thronged piazza fearful fires glare,  
The dying Master, scaffold, maddened mob,  
And deeds too dark for prayer.

Scant fruits time yields of Leonardo's store,  
Yet needed, he, for large fecundities  
By thrifty Rumor gleaned. His least sheaves  
feed  
The migrate centuries.

Upon Palazzo walls, spacious he loosed  
Hate's hordes unhelled, till fiery legions wheeled  
Up spilth of slippery blood, and steeds gone mad  
Charged furious down the field.

Of myriad vast beginnings, wizard-grasp,  
His very toil retarded by desire,  
He, molten-minded, fused facts cunningly,  
Insatiate did require

Life's lavish secrets, fixed and diagrammed  
The soul's swift movements. Enigmatical  
In Mona Lisa's smile sphinx-like he mocks,  
Remote, inscrutable.

Came Michael Angelo, his seething mind  
On fire from heaven and hell. To him men stood  
As naked, twisted souls, implacate wills,  
Inspired hardihood.

To keep men young, exultant on the steps  
His David stood, imperious strength and grace.  
Perchance as old and sad the Master passed  
Age dropped from him a space;

Impetuous boy again, unskilled, aghast,  
He plucked his pent-up manhood from the stone,  
God-goaded—sibyls, prophets, flashing by—  
Futurities unknown.

He of the turgid, overburdened heart,  
Who from drear spaces of his being hewed  
Death's brooding "Night," incarnate found the  
"Dawn"  
In some soul-solitude;

His "Judgment" gave to men and called it  
God's;  
Wraths, retributions, penalties, and strife,  
Limned deep upon his own mind's lofty walls  
By heavy hand of life.

Stern man of toil, whose eyes far-focused saw  
Men great, and painting made them so, who bore  
Truth's august message to a wondering world,  
Art's high-priest evermore.

## A Florentine Cycle 13

Saints, poets, painters, heroes, dreamers passed,  
All striving, toiling, hot with mortal breath,  
Their footsteps echo down Life's Loggia yet—  
So may men laugh at Death!

Idol of all, the old Palazzo stands,  
Bold cypher to a rare illumined text,  
A sweet perplexéd lyric heaven-writ,  
From Babel strangely vext.

Monarch in forest vast of towers, it sees  
Loved landmarks die as wounded birds, and  
hears  
Fall on Firenze as abundant rain  
The passing of the years.

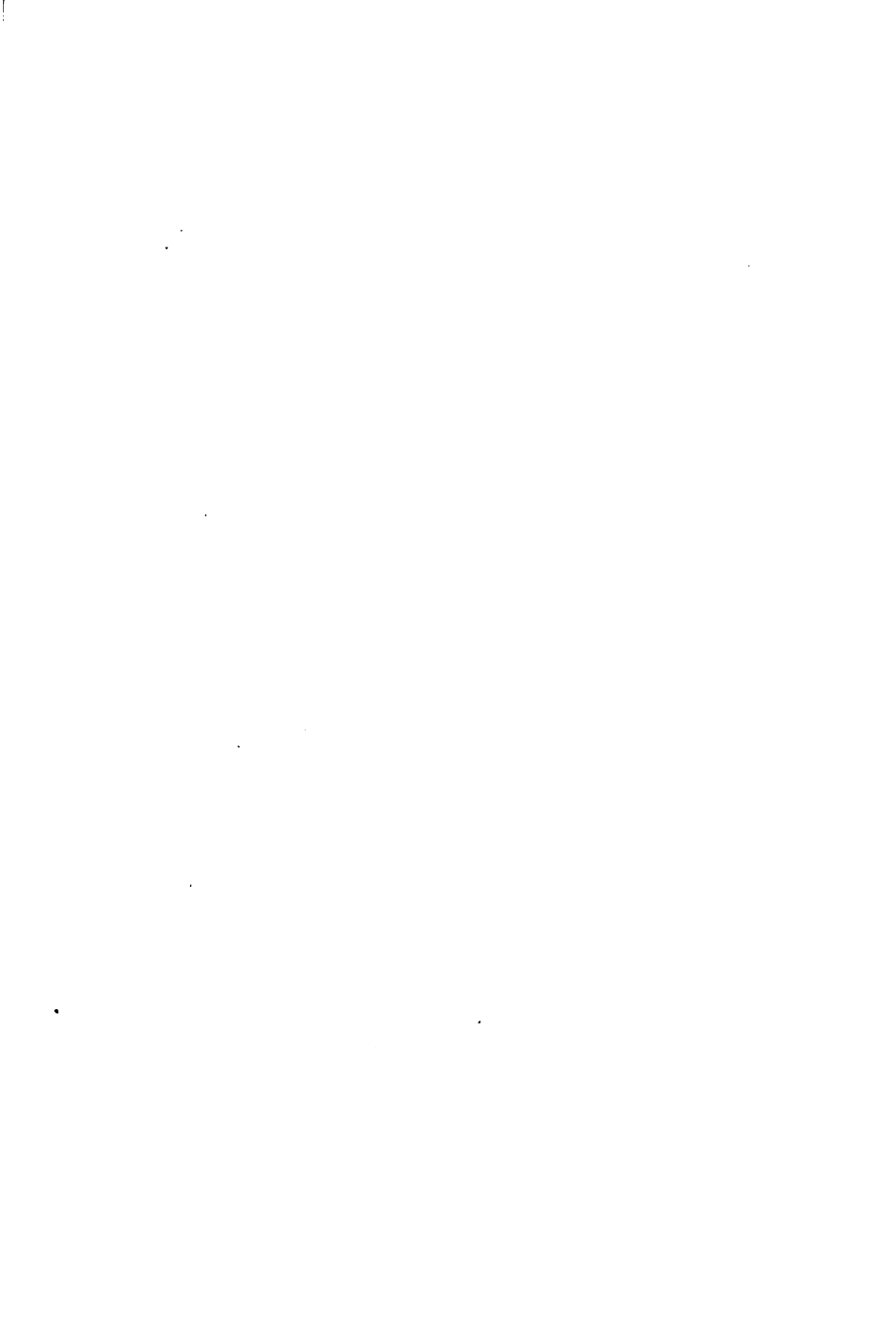
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#### HITHER TURN THE HEARTS OF MEN

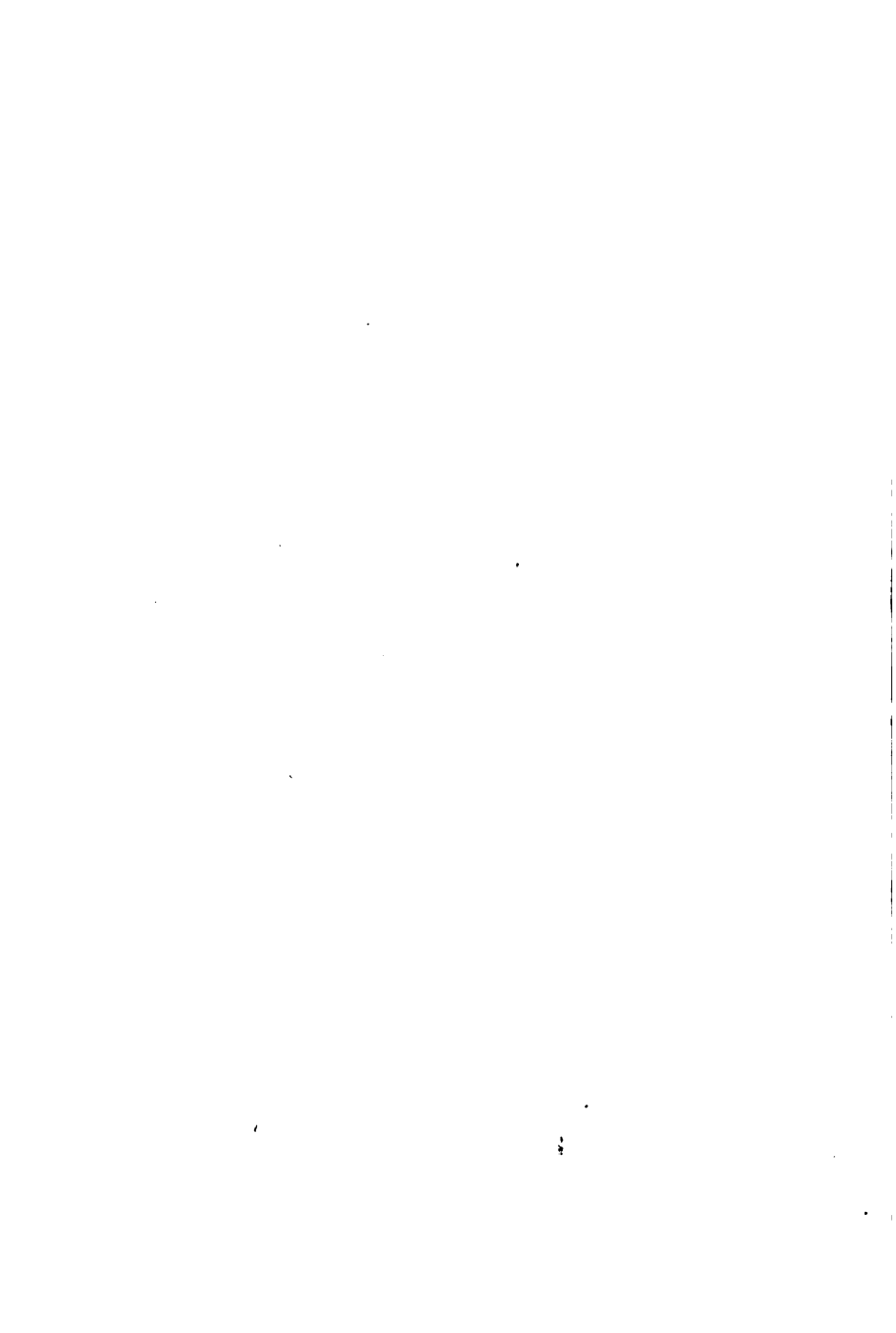
Most glorious, most famous child of Rome,  
Nurtured by Greece, in adoration cast  
Before the cross of Christ, Firenze lives  
Enshrined within her past,

Her last word said, whereto is nought to add,  
An eddy circling in God's memory,  
A splendid jewel on the breast of Time,  
Accomplished prophecy.





## Sketches and Runes



# Sketches and Runes

## TWILIGHT IN A TUSCAN GARDEN

WHITE roses, roses falling with the dew,  
God's words from latticed stars and trellised  
sky,  
God's vesper words—pale petals of His dream—  
See, ankle deep they lie!

The drip of unseen fountains strangely bound  
To rhythm of my steps hints shoulders bare  
And pipéd ditties, flutes among the reeds,  
And laughter everywhere.

Vague shadows track my soul—I see them hide  
In deep green pools where drowned the sunset  
lies—  
Their eyes shine through the pools like moving  
stars—  
The dark pools full of eyes.

Dream roses falling through hushed sunset lands,  
Pale star-cool petals, and on boughs o'erhead  
The nightingale—the twilight oracle—  
Singing the words God said.

The drowsy dust and pebbles hear God's feet  
That beat and beat—a wakeful ivy sways—  
Sways to and fro against the ruined arch  
    Loving such rhythmic ways.

The dusk! The garden close detached and dim,  
And full of fitful gradual mysteries,  
Strange as a face grown exquisite with love  
    And fateful prophecies.

A cry of twisted waters girds the gloom,  
Still thunders leap the garden leaf by leaf;  
Trees, waters, winds cry out—an old world  
    pain—  
    Oh Soul, 'tis thine own grief!

The quiet vesper thoughts of God drop down  
Through whirling worlds from gardens of the  
    sky—  
My heart is broken with the passioned mood  
    Of Beauty come too nigh.

## THE MARBLE NYMPH

HER laughter!

Moonlight—her pedestal o'erturned she flees  
To vistaed star-white ilex trees  
For fragrant kisses there.

Her laughter!

List, list, she sports with cupids free at last  
From weary garlands, duty past,  
Gay frolic everywhere.

Her laughter!

Swift gods and satyrs, wind-plucked robes blown  
wide,  
Spears dropped, shields, torches cast aside,  
And she so elfin fleet!

And after?

A lyric wreath to link the scattered years.  
Forgot—then clear amid my tears,  
Laughter and flying feet.

## LUCA AND ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA

SHABBY, faithful, and plain,  
    Seeking no gain,  
Childlike, with eager delight  
They modeled their angels white,

On heavenly blue, green wreathed  
    In blossoms sheathed,  
Glistening, spotless alway,  
As fashioned but yesterday.

Bambino, Madonna, and Saint,  
    Glimmering faint  
O'er portal, cloister, and aisle,  
Soft visions that know no guile.

To the great cathedral's nave  
    Glad Luca gave  
His frieze of marble song  
Dreamed o'er and cherished long;

Choicest and best of his art,  
    The boys of his heart.  
And as Andrea loved, so he wrought—  
Each cherub a sweet winged thought.

## Luca and Andrea Della Robbia 21

How they must have studied the grace  
    Of a baby face;  
And tenderly watched on the street  
The toddling and tripping feet!

How beggared the world would seem  
    Without their dream  
Of flowering walls! Do they know  
We love their angels so?



## SAN MARCO'S BELLS

AMID dim frescoed cloisters rich  
With faded saints and footworn tombs  
The soul-stress of those vanished monks  
Still looms.

Life upward, inward turned was full  
Of spirit-stirrings, and they wrought  
On altars, walls, and manuscripts  
Their thought.

Here raptured Fra Angelico  
In heaven's azure, flame, and gold,  
Portrayed his radiant visitants  
Of old.

Here Benedetto's burnished chaunts  
And gorgeous missals grew apace,  
And gentle industries filled all  
The place.

Bartolommeo anguished here  
And as he painted kneeled in prayer—  
Each prayer a vision, for his Lord  
Was there.

## San Marco's Bells

23

Savonarola pacing slow  
The prophets pondered e'er he hurled  
His mad anathemas against  
The world.

I wonder do they ofttimes steal  
Unheeded to their lonely cells  
In old San Marco when they hear  
Its bells.

## A BIT OF STONE

'Twas long ago—their very race is gone,  
Their place and part in those dim days unknown,  
Their daily life, so sweet, so hard, so high,  
Traced only in this sculptured bit of stone.  
He the austere, deep-thoughted, kindly man,  
And she responsive, gracious, rich with life—  
Here hand in hand they wait the centuries,  
Faithful, serene, courageous—husband, wife.

Perchance in gardens decked with ancient gods  
And rich with trophies of a conquered state  
He walked, and arduously wrought those laws  
We reverence yet, whose greatness made  
Rome great.

Else why this fine worn brow deep-lined with  
thought,

This strong, stern air of habit to command,  
Force the decisive moment, bend men's minds,  
Quicken and calm mad pulses with his hand?

And she, his wife, was she a helpmate true,  
And proud to bear his sons and daughters?  
Yea,

Her face is sweetly wise with motherhood,  
As those who o'er dear children watch and pray.

And did her dreams of those old future days  
Come true? Were her sons brave, her daughters chaste?

And doth that heritage of nobleness  
Come down the years with neither loss nor waste?

Had she perception, gifts of sympathy  
And kindly humour? Did she spare and shield  
His genius from the rude, time-taking world?  
And had she tact to soothe, and grace to yield?  
His loving hand seeks hers so naturally,  
I know he cherished her and found her fair  
With deep, unfailing love, and leading her  
Needed her mothering and gentle care.

The quiet days together, kind and calm,  
Apart from pomp and pageantry of state,  
Have left upon their brows a tender peace  
Nor worldliness can mar, nor thrust of fate.  
Dynasties perish, kingdoms wax and wane,  
Despairing empires pass, old realms are rent,  
Wars vex the weary earth, new worlds are won—  
These wait the ages, hand in hand, content.

## VENICE

THY palette lay with the luminous past,  
Live embers of days blood-dyed,  
Rich age-ground pigments of glory and fate  
And crystals of power and pride.

Thy canvas choose as one chooses a heart.  
Or the prayer that one says at night,  
Then, spirit bared to beauty, paint  
As a trembling lover might,

In sensitive, fugitive, subtle tones,  
As it dwells in thy inmost dream,  
San Marco, heart of the East and West,  
With minarets agleam;

San Giorgio of the Seaweed Isle—  
Its belfry like a flower—  
A delicate sculptured bas-relief  
Against a flaming hour;

The circling doves in the soft blue sky,  
And floating on the sea  
Proud columned marble palaces—  
Porphyry poesy.

With brain on fire, paint, but ne'er  
Was colour for boatman's cry,  
As the gondolas through tortuous ways,  
    With sweep of oar wink by;

Nor yet for the dolorous wild-bird's moan,  
The low voice of the sea,  
Nor the ache of mastering loveliness  
    That melts the heart of thee.

Paint till the vesper bells chime out,  
Till the great gold disk drops low,  
And the red and yellow sails hang limp  
    In the purple after-glow;

Till twilight steals o'er the gray lagoon,  
Black market boats glide home,  
And the crypts of shadow deepen fast  
    Beneath the fading dome.

Paint on till the darkness, then linger tranced  
As the valiant moon rides high,  
And the waterways shimmer like silver snakes,  
    And myriad lights trail by.

And lo! 'tis painted on thy soul  
For thine eternal dower—  
A gorgeous, opaline, tropic dream,  
    Framed in a Perfect Hour.

## SPRING ON THE COAST OF ITALY

A PRIMROSE, a heart-throb,  
The passionate sea,  
Phantom tread of dead armies,  
Press of things yet to be;

Lilting preludes, rash branches,  
Ruined temples of old,  
Flowering walls trailing coastwise,  
Far snow-peaks of gold;

Plowed furrows of promise,  
Green hilltops of sheep,  
Flocks of birds on the sky-line,  
Flocks of boats on the deep;

Bridal Spring! and I, waiting—  
Oh, the passionate sea!  
A primrose, a portent—  
Come, come, Love, to me!

## IN AN ITALIAN GARDEN

A SHINING hour, a shining sea,  
White villas glistening daintily  
Hung high 'mid silver olive trees.

The foolish fauns on the gay parterre,  
The conscious palms, and here and there  
Rose-woven crumbling balconies.

The shabby fountains, the vistaed ways,  
The sunken dial of other days  
And the phantom pomp of chivalry.

A scented hour, a scented breeze,  
The sunset mantle on the seas  
And everywhere a thought of Thee.



## A NEAPOLITAN CHANSON

THEY sang beneath the terraced palms,  
Beside the sparkling sea,  
'Till I knew nor which the buds that blew,  
Nor which the melody

Key-notes of colour, staves of bloom,  
Rhythms of shaken boughs,  
Of ruined grottoes, moss-grown founts,  
And youth's eternal vows.

Sunshine and song and muted strings,  
I knew nor which, nor why.  
It seemed the garden was a dream,  
The song its soul, and I—  
An idle butterfly.

## THE BELVEDERE TORSO

WHAT hand hath made? What hero this?

Who knows?

What matter? 'Tis the Greek Soul in repose.

The hand that wrought it by Aegean shore

Wrought for all ages, wrought for evermore.

The face, the very posture vague surmise.

Perchance he pondered 'neath Olympic skies

After Herculean labors, or told o'er

To eager ears his last immortal war

Yet breathless sung. Perchance in solitude

By moon-swept colonnade he lent his mood

To awful charm of ruined temples old

When Greece was young, or while Homeric  
rolled

He dreamed on gods that were, on gods to be.

Alas! we know not honours, name, degree.

For ages dear to men, now doubly dear

Since Michael Angelo, when old and drear,

Loved it above all else; grown blind and weak

Was carried to it; laid his wasted cheek

Against the mighty muscles reverently;

And hour by hour beside it silently

With fond slow fingers traced the sinews out,

Relived again youth's agonizing doubt,

That hour supreme when suddenly he saw  
Greek art's hid secret and with humble awe  
First entered Hellas with anointed heart.  
So to the end he measured all his art,  
Himself, his age, his cherished Italy,  
By its stern soul of beauty, Verity.

## AN OLD SILVER BOWL

FINE-WROUGHT as when from deft Cellini's  
hands it came  
Rose-wreathed, charmed lions guard the sacred  
altar-flame.

Mad grape-crowned satyrs tossing boughs and  
garlands dance  
To Orpheus' magic flute, and nymphs with  
luring glance

Their plunging dolphins guide past templed  
shores where rove  
Slim furtive dryads in their fettered woodland  
grove.

As first this ancient bowl breathed beauty,  
still it glows;  
But now are secrets hid within its brim. Who  
knows

What sighs have tarnished it, its rim what  
kisses worn?  
What pleasures it hath brewed, what fatal  
poisons borne

## 34            Sketches and Runes

To shrinking lips? How stirs its sparkling wine!  
      'Tis filled

With human fates. Its fauns at darkling deeds  
      have thrilled.

Ah so, fair Bowl, abide! Thou now dost live.  
      Love, tears,  
Laughter, and death have wrought their craft  
      through gathering years.

## AN EGYPTIAN LOVE CHARM

CARVEN with curious symbol and mystic sign,  
Enwrapped in tissue of gold, as in a shrine,  
It lay in a sandalwood casket wrought with  
pearl

And rare chased ivories. What slim, dark girl,  
What cherished love of king or caliph wore  
This delicate trinket? Did Egyptian lore  
Avail to keep faith true in hearts of old?  
And would their passionate love shame ours  
more cold?

Enchanted yet it breathes rose attar vows  
And lotus lure of love. Beneath palm boughs,  
By marble fountains, templed, sphinx-lined  
ways,

Were kisses treason or the pledge of days  
Heavy with fate? Was love too maddened  
sweet

For one so frail? Was love too fevered fleet?  
And did she wear this token to her grave,  
Counting all nought to be his queen or slave?  
And had she those fond fancies that defy  
The grave, soul of his soul, content to die  
Thinking sweet love immortal? Long since  
then

The centuries have borne great tides of men;

Undying Greece has flamed and flared away;  
Reverberant Rome has passed; yet to this day  
This fragile bit of perishable gold,  
With vows and kisses, prayers and tears en-  
scrolled,  
Fair as of old, wanders in distant lands,  
Homeless, aweary for those first soft hands.

## LOST IN THE DESERT

The burning sands!

The burning sands!

Lean huddled camels dragging feebly by,  
Hell's scarlet tongues licking the brazen sky,  
Your haggard face—there are no words to say!  
The fiery trackless waste—no prayers to pray!  
A trail of dead behind us one by one,  
No hope before, only the blinding sun  
    And burning sands,  
    And burning sands.

She. I dream of gurgling pools in mountain  
    caves,  
    Of swans and oars and widening foam  
    astern,  
    Of leaping cataracts and shoreless waves.

He. And water at our lips! Oh God, I see  
    Dark channels seething deathward cease-  
    lessly.

She. Full troughs and brooks with horses  
    wading through,  
    Swift rainfalls cupped in crevice of the hills,  
    Frail spangled spider-webs decked bright  
    with dew.



He. A lake! and plunging deep I find you  
there,  
Your gleaming face to mine—at last  
I dare.

She. Of grateful Judas on his far ice-floe,  
Of torrents gushing from the smitten  
rock,  
Christ walking on the waves of long  
ago.

He. Look, look! the flaming talons make  
(*dying*). retreat,  
Pale lotus weave a bridal winding sheet.

She Of those who blessed go down in ships at  
(*dying*). sea,  
Of drowsy exiles cradled in the snow,  
The flooding River of Eternity.

AUF EIN ALTES BILD  
(After the German of Mörike)

'NEATH glimmering green of summer days,  
Where waters cool the sunny air,  
How happy and free the little Christ plays  
Under his Mother's gentle care!  
While ever beyond in the forest maze  
The tree for his cross grows straight and fair.

## A PORTRAIT

HOMER-HEAD uplifted  
In the light.  
Eyes, such eyes as Homer's  
Had he sight.

Broad, abrupt—for background  
Let there be  
Beauty, terror, splendour,  
Verity.

As a prophet, sternly  
Let him stand  
'Gainst the faithless peoples  
Of the land.

Give him psalmist's gesture  
To decry  
Vanities and follies,  
Those who lie.

Catch his far-fixed vision,  
As he saw  
God move on the waters,  
Write His law;

Felt how young the world is  
Even now—  
Miracle and wonder  
On his brow!

Leave the sketch unfinished—  
Who can trace  
Goodness like a garment,  
Wit for grace?

What's a painting? Worthless.  
Far too fast  
Souls change. Thus! 'Tis over.  
Portraits last

Fix a passing moment,  
Fleeting phase?  
Yet hearts cherish it in  
After days.

## GARGOYLES

LIKE the little sins great souls ignore,  
The little sins we love them for,  
They cluster slyly with grimace and grin,  
Mocking the reverent peace within.

In unbridled mischief, a naughty brood,  
Defying the great cathedral's mood,  
'Twixt flying buttresses they stare  
At the holy ones who go for prayer.  
With horn and hoof, with leer and sneer—  
Impudent creatures—they peep and peer.

Grotesque, uncouth, down far below  
The sky-wrought spire they never know  
How petty their part in the soaring whole,  
And plume themselves with complacent soul,  
And nod and wink in conscious pride,  
As strangers spy them side by side.

Not demons accurst, nor a sin-bred crew,  
But the vagrant fancies some old priest knew;  
Gay imps that chased his prayers from the  
    throne—  
Now doomed forever to dwell in stone.

STRASSBURG.

## ALSATIAN SKETCH

A MARVEL of roofs in the thickets—  
Roofs steep, moss-stained and old,  
Guarded by files of poplars—  
Sentinels clad in gold.

Beyond the terraced vineyards  
Profiled in black outline,  
A windmill like a gallows  
Above the cradled Rhine.

For background a gorgeous sunset,  
Hill-tops in ecstasy,  
And a riot of flaming maples  
Just glorying to be.

And in the burnished foreground,  
A white road rutted deep,  
And lazy oxen followed  
By a peasant and his sheep.

## A RAMBLE IN NORMANDIE

BELTS of woodland, wigwam haystacks,  
Spire and walls and towers gray,  
Fields of flax and sweet-briar hedges,  
Gardens by the way.

Peasants 'mid the wheat and poppies,  
Hooded wagons winding by,  
Nibbling sheep and faithful sheep dogs,  
Calvaries lifted high.

Through the farm doors, caps and kirtles,  
Pewter plates in bright array,  
Norman pendules, shining brasses,  
Fit for king's display.

Hazy forests, far horizons,  
Green-patched hillsides, blue-massed skies,  
And the sweetest touch the babies—  
Spring-time in their eyes.

## THE RETURN OF THE FLEET TO BRETAGNE

FROM cove and harbour,  
Sea-wall and street,  
From vine-clad house-boats—  
A shipwrecked fleet—

The fisher-folk gather,  
Grouped far and wide,  
With crucifix gleaming  
Above the tide.

With strong set faces,  
With fixed tranced gaze,  
They wait the homing,  
From far seaways.

The salt on the seawinds,  
The salt on their lips,  
Their heart in the offing  
As the first sail dips.

A thousand vessels  
Ride in with dawn,  
A thousand vessels  
Six drear months gone.



## Sketches and Runes

The sails half sagging—  
The fleet is late;  
The watching women  
Sing as they wait.

Wait proud new mothers,  
Wait empty arms,  
Old mothers scanning  
With chill alarms.

Sweetheart and husband,  
Brother and son—  
Clement and Armand?  
They do not come!

A quailing question,  
And none to meet!  
An eager bridegroom  
And none to greet!

The crowd makes merry,  
To feast or wed.  
A few steal silent  
To weep their dead.

## A FISHER-FOLK LEGEND OF PICARDIE

BEACH fires and lanterns—  
    'Tis Fishers' Dance—  
A treacherous whisper,  
    A fatal glance.

Valette goes thinking  
    Upon the hill:  
"C'est ça, False Traitor,  
    A thought can kill."

Sharp hate strikes swiftly—  
    A fall! A cry!  
Too late repentant  
    She sees him die.

A madness upon her  
    She seeks his boat—  
"Together ever  
    The dead shall float."

Their sail is blazoned  
    With crouching dreams,  
Black wings pursue them,  
    Red anger gleams.

They drift the ocean—  
Saints save thy sight!  
High pallid torches  
Light up the night.

If lovers name them  
They break their vow.  
'Tis woe to sailors  
Who cross their prow.

If once they see them  
Accurst they go;  
If twice, they never  
Sweet sleep shall know;

And thrice—Christ keep them!  
'Tis death and hell,  
Blade, fire, or treason—  
A thought strikes well!

## SKETCHES FROM A CANAL BOAT

PAST hyacinth banks and crowded quay  
The slow canal winds out to sea,  
And tulip-laden boats lag down  
'Twixt vine-hid hamlet and red-roofed town,  
While Jansje 'broiders her wedding gown.

Carved timbered gables, drooped sails agleam,  
Crisp windmills mirrored athwart the stream—  
Each mill a gallows, so waters dream.  
And a flock of the children Rubens knew—  
Lace cap and shoenen and kirtle blue—  
Go clattering, chattering, knitting at play,  
With a pfennig to spend this glad fête day.

Beneath their cart the gaunt dogs pass  
With market greens and flagons of brass,  
Red apples and cheeses and little wares  
To tempt young Jansje from her cares.

On the grassy dyke gay coverlets dry,  
Patched hoarded heirlooms fluttering high,  
Old blues and magentas greyed by years,  
A lifetime of fading and labour and tears.  
Wee Gretchen atiptoe counts with care  
Big Jansje's linen bleaching there.

Gnarled, bent old women with wrinkled face  
In every doorway sit making lace,  
In every doorway and sunny space—  
And the lace for Jansje grows apace.  
Nor tongue they stay, nor hand, nor eye,  
Save death himself chance to pass by.

In the old church tower, crumbling and grey,  
The great bell clamors the hours away.  
It rings in years, it rings out souls—  
Hark! 'tis a baby—three it tolls.  
And Jansje shudders and kneels to pray,  
And hears the three knells sob all day.

The windmills wheel as the winds sweep by  
Beseeching and teasing—great birds should fly!  
As winds sweep by from horizons of flowers  
And countless ages crowd into the hours.

Great red-cheeked Jan with the milking pails  
Strides down the wharf 'twixt masts and sails.  
Shy, lace-capped Jansje knits at the gate.  
"Hist, Jan, would ye kiss when the kine are late?  
See the leaded panes glint copper-red  
At the sign of the Klompen and Tiger-head."  
"Thy lips are sweet"—so the milking sped.  
"I love till death, so another," he said.  
"Hist, Jan, would ye kiss when the kine are  
late?"  
"Nay, Jansje, Liebste, the kine can wait."

## SUITE BELGIQUE

### I

#### THE WORLD LIES BEFORE

OH the world lies before, let us flee hand in hand  
O'er the far sunny leagues of the hard yellow  
sand;  
Let us skim like great birds 'twixt the sea and  
the land!

There the ocean curves out like the cheek of  
a child,  
Spreading sails flit and flirt like white sea-  
gulls gone wild,  
And the world sways and swings because some-  
body smiled.

Glad hours wheel by like a soft pinioned dove,  
Joy glows in my heart like the bright sun above,  
And my soul melts within me to think of my love.

See a cloud lowers down like a hand from on  
high,  
And I reach up to clasp it through rifts in the  
sky—  
Oh the sunshine, the roar, and the spume flying  
by!

## II

## AT THE THREE ANCHORS

'TwiXT headlands that lift like pronged tusks  
in the sea

In a rock-girdled nest broods the old hostelry,  
Her steep shores no bar to her famed courtesy.

By the shrine in the gate hangs the cracked  
anchor-bell

In the garden of sunflowers bordered with  
shell,

Where the poll-parrot screeches "Merci, go  
to hell!"

The escutcheon—green field, bar of blue, ram-  
pant deer—

Is wrought o'er the chimney grown ample with  
cheer,

Where with babe on her arm, Madame serves  
smile or beer.

And 'tis at The Three Anchors you'll sup like a  
knight,

And the wine is as choice as the soufflé is  
light,

And they wave you farewell till the road dips  
from sight.

## III

## AT THE SIGN OF THE GOLDEN KEY

THE drowsy huts kneel like white nuns in a row,  
The slow bell laughs out as the brine breezes  
blow,  
And the sheep through the fields with the blind  
shepherd go.

Busy harvesters bend in the ripe yellow corn,  
Swinging scythes sing the note of the far boat-  
swain's horn,  
And the little goats frisk in the flush of the morn.

The anchored boats leap like wild ponies at play,  
And the brown nets are flecked by the froth of  
the spray  
As the fishermen file up the sands and away,

And 'tis over the dunes to the Inn by the sea,  
Over mountainous dunes to the good Golden Key,  
And you'd best choose the way past the tall  
poplar tree.

And 'tis back by the cliff when the waves cease  
to run,  
Past the pool cleft with gold by the sword of  
the sun,  
To the house-boat and hearth when the sunset  
is done.



## IV

## AT THE PORTAL OF HEAVEN

PAST the militant abbey now ravaged and gray,  
In whose war-ruined niches the damaged saints  
prayer

At their sculptured devotions in stoical way,

You will find the Inn-door in an alley of flowers,  
Where a cool Jove-faced fountain purls over  
the hours,

And the shining canal hurries down to the  
towers.

Through a vista of cedars gleam vineyards  
below,

Far battlements lean o'er a ruined chateau,  
And the pilgrims creep by in the pale after-  
glow.

A thousand halt cripples, a thousand who  
prayer—

God curses them not as they creep on their  
way

To the portal of heaven—and who shall gain-  
say? .

Pain's passionate litany runs down the line,  
The flickering candles on crucifix shine  
As they wind down the years ever seeking a  
sign.

## THE VALLEY OF ROCKS

HEADLANDS and hills and a world of rocks—  
How cares bleach out in the golden weather!  
The friendly goat, the breezes and I  
    Clambering up the crags together.

Inland below the "Witches' Cave,"  
The "Devil's Cheese Ring" across the valley,  
Where the white road coils like a silver snake,  
    And lazy shadows flit and dally.

Sheer seaward the tide-hounds harry and race,  
Salt echoes tingle the mountain passes,  
And self like a husk blows forgotten away,  
    The soul roams naked among the grasses.

And the only sin is to hold aloof—  
Hearts should unfold in the shining weather—  
And the only prayer is that God may know  
    How we feel His heart beat in the heather.

LYNTON, DEVON.

## A MAINE TRAIL

COME follow, heart upon your sleeve,  
The trail, ateaasing by,  
Past tasseled corn and fresh-mown hay,  
Trim barns and farm-house shy,  
Past hollyhocks and white well-sweep,  
Through pastures bare and wild,  
Oh come let's fare to the heart-o-the-wood  
With the faith of a little child.

Strike in by the gnarled way through the swamp  
Where late the laurel shone,  
An intimate close where you meet yourself  
And come unto your own,  
By bouldered brook to the hidden spring  
Where breath of ferns blows sweet  
And swift birds break the silence as  
Their shadows cross your feet.

Stout-hearted thrust through gold green copse  
To garner the woodland glee,  
To weave a garment of warm delight,  
Of sunspun ecstasy;  
'Twill shield you all winter from frosty eyes,  
'Twill shield your heart from cold;  
Such greens!—how the Lord Himself loves green!  
Such sun!—how He loves the gold!

Then on till flaming fireweed  
Is quenched in forest deep;  
Tread soft! The sumptuous paven moss  
Is spread for Dryads' sleep;  
And list ten thousand thousand spruce  
Lift up their voice to God—  
We can a little understand,  
Born of the self-same sod.

Oh come, the welcoming trees lead on,  
Their guests are we today;  
Shy violets smile, proud branches bow,  
Gay mushrooms mark the way;  
The silence is a courtesy,  
The well-bred calm of kings;  
Come haste! the hour sets its face  
Unto great Happenings.

## THE RUNE OF THE PRAIRIE

HARK! The wandering Prairie Spirit chants  
His plaint, his heart-break of monotony.

And we—

Who find the prairie grass so high  
Between our toil-mown swaths that lie

So far, so near—

We hear his footfall and his dull lament; we hear  
His weary strophe echoing from the skies,  
Where all paths merge in one that lies

Beyond surmise.

We hear his melancholy fugue of fate,  
His dreary dirge of loneliness, his tears;  
And we toil on, and with great patience wait  
Upon the years.

## THE RUNE OF THE FOG

GIGANTIC phantom crags and ghostly trees,  
Dark battlements of strange uncertainties,  
Fantastic forms of fancies gone astray,  
Dim stalking shadows, pallid wraiths of day,  
And I alone groping for thy dear face  
Through mists of silence drifting the wastes of  
space.

## THE RUNE OF THE FOREST

It calls—it calls to me  
By shadowy brake and fern,  
Where the wan wild roses yearn,  
Where the silver birches brood  
In gentle solitude.  
By sweet cool bouldered ways,  
Where the lurking spirit sways  
The tangled boughs, and low  
Strange rustling love-dreams blow,  
It calls—it calls to me.

It beckons—beckons me  
Up vistaed steeps foretold  
By tree-tops etched in gold,  
Where deep-eyed violets sigh—  
Faint fragrant undercry.  
Past luring forbidden paths  
Of desolate pleasures and wraths,  
Down shelterless breathless ways,  
Wind-swept and heart-break days,  
It beckons—beckons me.

It urges—urges me  
Past thickets mystic deep,  
Where lost hours stir and sleep,

## The Rune of the Forest 61

Past haunted caves where dream  
Portending days, where gleam  
Pale, sunken stars of fate  
That summon me and wait.  
On—on resistlessly  
Unto Eternity  
    It urges—urges me.



## THE RUNE OF THE SEA

THE fateful line of level light  
Girdling the gilded sea;  
The gnawing waves on the wastes of sand,  
And the pitiless hunger for Thee.

The black hulks looming like ghostly dreams;  
The wide, wide sundering sea;  
And beyond—Eternity's desolate edge  
That shadows Thee and me.

## THE BROOK

A RUSH of twisted waters through the glen,  
Eager and valorous it delves and hews;  
A Future City waits to flower its banks,  
So must it wisely choose!

It leaps, it dances on its dainty way;  
That spot is for cathedral arch, and there  
Some day will rise great deathless marble heights,  
So must it have a care!

## HARVEST SONG

NOR wings, nor words have we,  
Yet cheerily each tree  
    From first bird-call  
    To last leaf-fall  
    Toils joyfully.

Nor boast, nor effort know,  
Yet bursting buds bestow  
    Sweetness untold;  
    Red fruits and gold  
    Wave to and fro.

Nor psalm, nor prayer we raise,  
Yet yearly give Him praise  
    With harvests bright  
    For His delight,  
    Ancient of Days.

## A SONG OF TREES

A SONG of trees is in the air—  
Hush, Sunset, hush! The Forest sings—  
It is mine own most ancient prayer.

I feel the chained roots strive to run;  
The patient arms reach out and up  
To touch the stars, to clasp the sun.

Some trees are gnarled, like you and me;  
And some are dwarfed; some regal rise  
For splendid throne and panoply.

That lithe young fir in honour stands;  
Anointed, choice, elect it grows  
For love's doorsill in stranger-lands.

Thy bier this ancient moss-hung tree;  
An altar that for rites unwrit;  
And here Christ's cross, the Christ to be.

Strange human rhythms bend the boughs—  
Low cradle measures, organ peals,  
And sway of masts, and hum of ploughs.

Beneath the early thoughts of God  
We lay together for a space  
Ere He for man had plucked the sod.

Mingled together, dreaming so,  
We rocked with thunders, fought the winds,  
We laughed at rain, we loved the snow.

We kept the watches of the morn  
With sacrament of dew and star,  
Long, long ago ere sin was born.

Like butterflies bright months sailed by,  
Winged flame and frost. Pale petals loosed,  
The silvern nights dropped from the sky.

The strident lion loved our shade,  
The lordly eagle sought our branch,  
And who were we to be afraid?

Right eagerly "aye, aye" was said  
When year by year God called the roll,  
Each tree by name—the quick, the dead.

Old speech, old customs wake within,  
Wild moods and teeming primal dreams,  
I am come back to mine own kin.

With head as on my mother's knees,  
My soul lost in the passionate song,  
I am at home among the trees.

The Garden of the Gods and  
Other Poems



# The Garden of the Gods and Other Poems

## THE GARDEN OF THE GODS

THE walls thereof were high, its corners bright  
With flowering almond, sweet Sicilian flag.  
Phœnician cypress lined long arch-strewn ways;  
Rills gushed o'er broken columns; fleecy flocks  
Strayed through cyclopean portals nibbling buds  
From crumbling altars sprung. Hares scurried

by

To drink where once white Daphne's shadow  
bent.

Sharp honey dripped from myrtle-hidden  
shrines,

And swallows nested in the marble tombs.

Yet saw I not these common things of day  
For all about me rain-worn idols stared.

Vine-covered mosques and temples filled the  
sky;

Tall towers soared, four-sided, human-faced,

High as the nameless hopes of faiths forgot.

Afar dim pyramids shone pale and blurred;

Slim stelæ marked a hazy Sacred Way

By dolmen blocked and jealous Druid stones.



## 70      The Garden of the Gods

Grotesque, rock-carven gods from tropic isles  
Grinned shrewdly over giant rubber-trees.  
Stretched prone, a sleeping Buddha bridged a  
stream.

In noble ruin lay an obelisk  
By crocus fringed and purple violets.  
An avenue of sphinxes led to caves  
Where sat gigantic deities as though  
They judged dead hosts yet prostrate in the  
gloom.

Again in outer sunshine I beheld,  
Cut on sheer cliffs by some prodigious race,  
Colossal monkeys, huge, tempestuous gods  
On dragons borne, or holy elephants.  
Thrust through wild-apple boughs a viking's  
prow

Of alien splendours spoke—intrepid faiths  
Whereon tread gentler feet of lesser gods.  
Strange forms I knew not, gods from frozen  
lands,  
In stalwart glory shone across the grass.

Bewildered which bright way to wander, chance  
My footsteps guided. Spellbound I beheld  
The gods of Greece as on Olympus met—  
Apollo! Hermes! Aphrodite! Zeus!  
Wild grapes twined Bacchus. Blue-eyed Pallas  
gleamed  
Deep in a space of hyacinths apart.

## The Garden of the Gods 71

In flecks of sunlight glimmered Artemis,  
A field of gold narcissus at her feet.  
Above, a peerless marble sisterhood  
Clustered about Athene's sacred walls.  
Against empurpling crown of hills they shone  
Translucent, mellow, in the amber air.  
Below, most splendid temples filled the plain,  
Dim groves of pillars sloping to the sea.  
A space I scarcely breathed, scarce could I  
think—  
The holiness of beauty filled the earth!  
I could but kneel before them glad of heart  
That man somewhere, sometime, had dreamed  
such dreams.

Impelled lest garden vanish I pressed on,  
An awe upon me lessened not by scroll  
Nailed high upon a birch whereon was traced  
"Unto the Unknown God." Below were  
heaped  
Coins, golden goblets, earthen jars and lamps.  
Lead votive offerings hung upon the boughs, \  
Sweet-scented meadow-grass worn bare be-  
neath.

Beyond were rugged hill-hewn sepulchres.  
No graven image here, nought save great  
names—  
Isaiah, Jeremiah—and I knew  
'Twas holy ground. The ark of covenant

## 72      The Garden of the Gods

Stood in the midst, and blazoned over it  
"Jehovah, Lord of Lords and God of Gods,"  
While on the air rose smoke of sacrifice.

Enclosed by aspens shone a slender spire,  
Among the shaken boughs it seemed to sway.  
My heart beat quickly as I found stone steps  
And came upon a Gothic chapel-door.  
Gaunt walls in ruin, buttresses like ribs  
Revealed the gnawing emptiness within,  
But in the choir still hung a scourged Christ,  
And safe below the blessed relics lay—  
Knee-cap of Stephen, hair of Saint Therese.  
Rough walls were dimly lit by faded saints,  
And shining o'er the portal glowed the Child.  
Day darkened as I left, but through the dusk  
Came paradisaal chords ineffable,  
The organ echoes of a requiem mass.

Lost in a maze of olives I sat down  
To ponder on man's passion after God.  
Came a dim glory, footsteps in the gloom.  
Beside a bare rough cross they ceased to be.  
Then from the radiance these vibrant words:  
"From the beginning have they worshipped me.  
In stone, in wood, they seek me. Race by race  
Cries unto me and prostrate sees me not.  
For me blood girdles red the thirsty earth.  
Oft I am some embodied fear, again  
I seem or sun, or beast. Harsh power am I

And beauty; ofttimes high ecstatic peace  
Of deadened souls. Man loves me, pitiful  
In his devotion gives his quivering flesh  
Unto the sword, the flame, tortured for me.  
And I for him dwell in these graven rocks,  
This paltry rubbish and these tawdry things.  
When will they know me, see me face to face?

Moses, Elijah, listened when I spoke.  
Young David knew me in the starlit night.  
To Zoroaster was I very near;  
Light of the World, he found me in the sun  
With far prophetic eyes, and worshipped me.  
Confucius through his din of thoughts heard  
mine.

Upon the desert Allah is my name.  
Chance shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem  
Went all their days awonder at my song.  
Paul saw me darkly, blurred as through a  
glass.

One called me Father, loved me as a son—  
The veil between us thinner day by day—  
Then did men crucify him! crucify!

This Garden of men's gods I love, and these,  
Men's toys of faith, of groping hope, I love.  
None scorn I lest one worshipper be lost,  
And he with outward eye denied my face  
Who later with the inward had beheld.  
These, even these gross idols, point the way;

## 74      The Garden of the Gods

Behold rocks speak and stones give forth my  
praise,

Yet am I lonely in my holiness.

I would it were as comrades men would come

And shoulder unto shoulder walk with me

Who am, Who was, Who evermore shall be."

## ALL SOULS' NIGHT

As it was promised them so I beheld.

'Twixt sun and sun wild beasts became as  
men.

No longer swinging their great heads, they  
looked

Amazed upon each other, saw the moon,  
The still, dumb trees. The air scarce bore the  
noise

Of their rejoicings, their thick stutterings,  
The Babel of their unpent, laboured thoughts.

Life-channels, old obliterate origins

By man forgot, they subtly understood.

Birds knew the wise mechanics of their flight,

The beaver of its bridge, the bee its hive.

Bears pondered on the habits of their kind.

The lion kneeled before the spectacle

Of its age-thwarted life by speech set free.

The ape wrought curious tools for stranger  
arts;

Knew not if to invent, or speak, or think

Gave greater joy; threw off incumbrances

Life loaded on him when the stars were young,

And stood there in his glory, Lord of all,

The peer of man in mind, beyond him far

In gifts surrendered by mankind or lost.

## 76      The Garden of the Gods

Then even as I looked the dawn stole in,  
Eyes faded and great heads began to swing.  
Most pitiful of all and last to change  
The ape reluctant dropped its tools and fled  
Beyond the gates of consciousness, again  
A gibbering, furtive beast, by nature damned.

## HALF ASLEEP

To let one's fancy range;  
    To play the bed is so,  
The window so, as it used to be  
    In that home of long ago;

To play the door is here;  
    The street is crisscross there;  
And then to wait, as I used to wait,  
    For the step upon the stair.

To count as the footsteps pass,  
    Now near, now faint and far—  
How personal they sound at night,  
    What company they are!

Some brisk and some sedate,  
    I wonder where they go;  
And I drowse a little, till suddenly  
    The dear, dear step I know.

The start of joy, the flush,  
    The tender, happy thrill,  
And then, oh, God! I am homeless and old,  
    And his grave is on the hill!



## A PARADOX

QUIET I sit by the hearth as the slow years go.

Helpless I sit and dream—my hungry heart  
Afar in strange adventures. Who can know

How I scale the frowning crags of destiny,  
And talk with God and angels on the mount,  
And there renounce love's right of sovereignty?

How I dare go down into the deeps of dread,  
And wrestle in the garden of loneliness,  
And vanquish hosts of evil and raise the dead

From adamantine graves? How, robbed and  
faint,

I lie forsaken beside life's thoroughfare  
As the crowd pass careless—friend and priest  
and saint—

And only a tattered Samaritan dream comes  
near—

His largess of love my pence at the Inn of Hope?  
Who can know of my strangled joy and fear,

Compelling visions, passioning, gain and loss?

How wild winds from the infinite beat on me,  
While outlined ahead in the gathering gloom  
looms the cross,

And I grope on alone a challenge to fate?

. . . . .

Patient and petted beside the hearth I dream  
With quiet eyes, and watch the years—and wait.

## OLD SELVES

Out of the past, my old selves from their lair,  
Soul-burned, time-earned, the halt, the maimed,  
the fair,  
Those old strange selves, they pass me by and  
stare,

They pass and stare.

They pass, they pass! I know them all so  
well!

Why she is joyous only I can tell,  
And why she weeps, why she wears asphodel,  
I know so well.

One murdered walks in bloody winding sheet,  
One sings low cradle songs unto her sweet,  
And one has marks like His in hands and feet,  
In hands and feet.

They throng—I hear the clank of chains and  
bars—

See here upon my wrists the cruel scars!  
Her wistful eyes shine out like wondering  
stars,

Wan wistful stars.

What colours circle her—bright souls she knew,  
Crowned saints and heroes, scarlet, flame and  
blue!

From out life's glowing tapestry they grew,  
You, dear, and you!

One toils, one strives, one staggers in the heat,  
One has great weariness and bleeding feet,  
And one knew kisses—ah, but they were sweet!  
Love, they were sweet!

And she with groping hands toward coming  
day,  
The dreaming child who dreamed too much  
to say—  
The fluttering bubbles broke, I turn away,  
I turn away.

That eager, tender self—the world was cold;  
That timid shrinking self—but Love made  
bold;  
And she, the sunset one, with sheaves of gold,  
Scant sheaves of gold.

Time may not blight, nor Death smite one  
least rose;  
Red-petaled yet in land of last year's snows,  
Perpetual in suns forgot, it blows,  
And He, He knows.

## 82      The Garden of the Gods

Glad-eyed, hope-crowned, singing upon their  
    way,  
God-pledges, shadows in a brave array,  
With trumps and palms they pass—and some  
    who pray,  
        And some who pray.

They pass, they pass, with hands held out to  
    me—  
My old selves robed in immortality—  
In earth, in heaven, in hell, mine utterly,  
        Mine utterly.

## AN EPITAPH

(TO F. F.)

HAD Botticelli painted thee with his divinest  
hue,  
Thy spirit like a sword had pierced the shining  
pigment through.

HAD Luca known thee he had loved to fashion  
thee a frame,  
And thy bright beauty wreathed in it had  
brought him greater fame.

HAD Watteau posed thee he had seen thy  
buoyancy and grace,  
And humbly bowing, begged thee choose thy  
own free poise and place.

HAD Rembrandt—nay! no shadows dark were  
ever near thee seen—  
Van Dyck were liker to have known fit back-  
ground for a queen.

La Rochefoucauld an epigram had for thy  
picture writ,  
His clear mosaic words inspired by thy more  
nimble wit.

## 84      The Garden of the Gods

A chaplet Fénelon had wove of thy sweet  
piety—

The sick bless yet thy tenderness, the poor  
thy charity.

## THE BELATED CHRIST

LONG the great God patient waited,  
Waited for the Christ belated,  
For the Christ that was to be.

Oft the heavens, sadly bending,  
Mourned the unseen dove ascending,  
Mourned the Christ not yet to be.

Mighty prophets failed, unknowing  
God His sonship was bestowing;  
Blind—the Christ they might not be.

Some on mountain tops chose glory,  
E'en Hell mocked their piteous story—  
Their lost right the Christ to be.

Some the Christ-life lived, till, failing  
At the cross, went shuddering, wailing,  
That the Christ they dared not be.

Some found death too sweet a guerdon,  
Shrank the final, fearful burden,  
Would not rise the Christ to be

And the good God patient waited,  
Waited for the Christ belated,  
For the Christ that was to be.



## 86      The Garden of the Gods

Till came One who, lowly bending,  
Saw the heavenly dove descending,  
And left all the Christ to be.

Tempted not by this world's gaining,  
Tempted not by right of reigning,  
Left it all the Christ to be.

Lost Himself for love of others,  
Gave Himself to save His brothers,  
Winning power God's Christ to be.

Bore for them the crucifixion,  
Dared for them the resurrection,  
Evermore their Christ to be.

## SPLENDID FAILURES

MEN to bay and laurel bow,  
As is meet.  
But the whole world loving kneels  
At the feet

Of the splendid failure hung  
On the Tree.  
It seems yet I hear Him say,  
Who will be

To the God within him true?  
Who will die  
For his vision? Crucified  
As was I?

## FAREWELL

FAREWELL, oh little son of mine!  
Thou tak'st the heart of me.  
My life is as a fallen leaf  
To blow to thee.

The time together twinkled by—  
So fitting brief the space  
We hand in hand walked ere thou went'st  
Beyond my pace!

I can no longer see thy path,  
No longer choose thy way;  
But love leaps out across the years  
And I can pray.

Who'll guard thee, save thee an thou fall?  
Who'll comfort thee in pain?  
Oh God! that I may never see  
Thee home again!

Farewell! Farewell! Life trumpets thee!  
These bursting tears but show  
I would not, dare not bid thee stay—  
Adieu, Dear! Go!

## IN HOSPITAL

EVER before no hand save mine  
Fended or toiled for thee;  
Now 'twixt us these divided walls  
Break heart of me.

No touch save mine hath soothed thy brow  
Or eased thy dole of pain;  
Now must I weep without the door  
And call in vain.

I know thou sayest o'er my name,  
Aweary for my face;  
I can but hold my arms toward thee  
Across the space.

## IDENTITY

So slight the jeweled girdle of the soul!  
Thoughts strain and dreams wear thin  
Its substance. Jar of passion, shock of sin,  
The delicate brush of a joy's swift wing—  
And lo! 'tis snapt! The scattered jewels ring  
Against the pavements of the stars or cling  
In tendrils of the dawn, and the soul sweeps  
Far out into unfathomable deeps.  
Yet haply some stray part  
Nests in a comrade's heart.  
So slight the jeweled girdle of the soul!

## NOCTURNE

DEAR Heart, could it be so  
That I should love and thou not know,  
Let be, nor pity me, my life is sweet because of  
thee!

And Dear, should it be so  
That thou dost love and I not know,  
What matters it to thee or me? Love has  
eternity!

## A DREAM

It was so sweet to see her,  
So buoyant, loving, true,  
With all the dear old tricks of speech,  
And the calm, brave smile I knew.

We had so much to say,  
So much we each would know,  
But oh, poor heart, I had forgot,  
She died long years ago.

## THE GOOD ANGEL OF THE HOUSEHOLD

(TO K. R. B.)

BEAUTIFUL face and heart,  
Nature's most noble art,  
Time's masterpiece of Love!  
Fainting we look at thee,  
Lifted, inspired, we see  
Visions of Hope above.  
Impress of strong, sweet life,  
Wrought by thy soul's brave strife—  
Holy the path thus trod!  
Down through the ages roll  
Waves from thy mother-soul,  
Bearing great hearts to God.



## HER VOICE

HER voice is mystical and low,  
It beats my thoughts away.  
Her words are sacrificial flames,  
I see them when I pray.

I feel great splendid scarlet wings  
Brushing against my face;  
I walk upon the molten sea  
And lack not any grace.

Her voice is soft—an April breeze  
That gently blows through me.  
My waste heart is a garden now,  
A cheerful place to be.

In glittering ranks with lance and shaft  
Her shining words sweep by;  
Brave bannered ships they come and go,  
Swift flocks against the sky.

Her voice has shadows hid within—  
Some be who faint and fast—  
Dark hint of vows and martyrdoms,  
Worn pilgrims chanting past.

It has a sound of dainty mirth  
Upon aeolian strings,  
Of tourneys, knights, and stepping steeds,  
Of doughty happenings.

Her voice is comfortable and kind  
Like my dear mother's eyes,  
Her cool white hand upon my brow,  
Her gentle lullabies.

Her voice is low and mystical,  
Pale starlight on the snow,  
Swift running water in the dark,  
Lost faces lovers know.

## EN PASSANT

Two faces loom! Two faces loom!  
One deathless instant in the gloom.  
Spirit to spirit soul-sheer they gaze  
Down breathless, hazardous, difficult ways.

What visions! Life unto life laid bare—  
Thy life and mine—how did we dare?  
Always, ever, on through the gloom  
Two faces loom! Two faces loom!

## THE GREAT LEISURE

LIFE like a debtor  
With soul in fee,  
Branded and shackled  
In slavery;  
Harried and hurried,  
Buffet of care,  
Hither and thither,  
Scarce time for prayer!

Then the great leisure!  
Nonchalant now,  
Aeons to squander  
With granite brow.  
Princely the pastime  
Counting the springs,  
So are the daisies  
Great happenings.

## IMMORTALITY

Dost live? Then thou immortal art.  
But what of those who conquer not?  
Who drift with neither helm nor chart—

Superior nor to self nor sense  
Nor circumstance? Who even here  
Know naught of life? Do they go hence?

Are they immortal either now  
Or after death? Nay, God is good,  
And in His wisdom doth allow

To towering oak, to tiniest flower,  
A place within His circling care,  
To bloom, to fade—a day, an hour

But conquering souls who with Him bear  
His life, His cross, His sepulchre—  
Who from their scarred and dead self dare

To roll the mighty rock and rise—  
These are with Him immortal, yea,  
These here or there with conquering eyes

Have passed the grave—they have no part  
With death—they live! And dost thou live?  
Then thou, thou too, immortal art.

## POST TENEBRAS LUX

**AFFRIGHTED** down Death's realms I fled  
By star-spurned whirling ways that led  
Past yawning gates—the gates of Hell—  
Past splendid shriveled worlds that fell  
In that swift judgment night of gloom  
When headlong rushing doom met doom.  
With love and hate in endless chase,  
Despairing, helpless in the race,  
With whitened lips that might not pray,  
I reached out hands that might not stay  
O'er seething gulfs and plunging spheres  
For vanishing wraiths of mortal years,  
For phantom blooms on rocks of fate  
That slipped my fingers—too late, too late!  
On o'er the winds I rode, I fled  
Past solitudes of arid dread,  
Furrowed with vengeance, black with fears,  
And sown with human blood and tears;  
On past the fathomless, starless shade  
Where shivering fugitives hid and prayed;  
Past limitless void and cycles of pain—  
I caught a moment—then on again  
Through drifts of flame from caverns of sin—  
Red were the beckoning hands within:

## 100    The Garden of the Gods

On dizzily, madly on and on,  
And no place in Chaos to rest upon!  
I heard the wails of the Lost apart—  
Their burning tears dripped through my heart.  
I heard wild laughter startle the deep,  
Heard mocking malice its revels keep.  
I heard faint earth-bells echoing blow,  
Heavily freighted with mortal woe.  
On, ever on, in awe and wonder,  
Amid the scattering, rocking thunder;  
Amid the lightnings sharp and red,  
As it were vacancies that bled;  
On past the whirlwinds of Destiny,  
Into the calm of Eternity.  
Escaped far spent from Death's abyss,  
I wearily crept to the threshold of Bliss.

At bay at last I lifted my eyes,  
And lo! the Throne in Paradise!  
Alone together, face to face,  
My soul and God in that holy place!  
Long time we gazed—I knew at last  
I was satisfied. Heart-thirst was past,  
And gnawing hunger and groping sight.  
Then the spark that had lighted me through  
    life's night  
Flashed back, nor feared God's challenging  
    eyes.  
"Art come unsullied through earth and skies,  
O little soul?" "I make no plea—

I only know it is Home with Thee."

"Hast thou no fear 'midst the undefiled?"

"Thou art my Father—I am Thy child."

Long time we gazed—and then—God smiled.



## AZRAEL

DREAD episode sublime,  
Catastrophe of Time,  
Great Devastator Death!  
Thy sudden fatal breath  
Strikes chill against my day.  
Lead on—I own thy sway.  
Unveil thy sphinx-wrapped brow,  
Finger from lips take thou,  
Hold fast my hand—I go  
Adventuring to know.  
No more in masquerade,  
Of my own soul afraid,  
Fearless I ask of thee,  
Show me Eternity.

## GHOSTS

OH what do I see in thy face, dear child?  
Grave eyes look out at me.  
It is an ancient unknown soul,  
    A stranger to me and thee.

Oh why dost thou weep without cause, dear  
    child?  
I sorrow for pain forgot.  
And why art thou angered? In some old life  
    Hate's venom hath left a spot.

And why dost thou start in the dark, dear child?  
I one time murdered men.  
And why dost thou shudder at sound of chains?  
    I was a captive then.

Art pure, flower-pure as a babe, dear child,  
Yet beasts glare in thine eyes.  
I lived with them once when the angel closed  
    The gates of Paradise.

Whence that exalted, holy look  
That makes me kneel to thee?  
'Tis the after-glow of some good life  
    That ofttimes shines on me.

## 104     The Garden of the Gods

And why is thy gaze so far away?  
I hunger for other lands.  
And why dost thou smile as the angels smile?  
    I touch their unseen hands.

How goest thou fearless to danger, dear child?  
In my blood is victory;  
I knew no fear for a hundred lives;  
    Could I now craven be?

Will the ceaseless change ne'er end, dear child?  
This is eternity;  
As the rain and the cloud, my spirit keeps  
    Its immortality.

## OVERHEARD

### THE DOG

I COME, I make my place, I stay,  
Appealing not demanding;  
I speak no word, yet silent say

A thousand things; speak faith and love,  
Devotion, understanding.  
As anciently, I know how move

Your moods, for once we two were kin,  
Before that day of wonder,  
When you began to laugh, to sin,

Became a master—God to me—  
And speech clove us asunder.  
We gloried in your victory,

Just missing it, we dogs who strove  
With you through ages, craving  
The mastery. Still jungle, grove

Live in your blood. We understand  
Each other, as when braving  
The wild we ran a preying band.

## 106    The Garden of the Gods

'Tis good for you to be with me,  
Throw off your mask, returning  
To that old simple comradery

With me, a dog beneath your feet,  
Man's artifice unlearning, .  
Man's sophistry, pretense, deceit.

To laugh, to weep, to speak, to know—  
I half but ne'er quite venture—  
Beyond these customs kinships go.

See here's my paw, I will obey,  
Accept your praise or censure—  
Sin yet may make me man some day!

### THE CHILD

You are so big and tall,  
You're twice as big as I;  
But it won't do at all  
To have you master—why?  
Why, doggie, I don't know;  
It happened long ago;  
And I—I can't remember—  
Only since last December.

## RETRIBUTION

Idle I dreamed and dreamed and dreamed of old;  
And now when I would use my mind's best  
rooms,

Alas, I find but grave clothes, cobwebs, mould,

And the dank chill of death. I hasten through  
Those long-closed twilit chambers of my soul,  
Some strewn with rubbish, some fast sealed—a  
few

Still hold the frozen forms of life—my dead.  
Alone with these—the wages of mine ease—  
In helpless impotence I bow my head.

Yet Jairus' child? She slept so brief a space.  
And Lazarus? He sister had. But I?  
I scan the dust-dimmed pane—Oh for His face!

Does not the Master know the dead lie here?  
Will no one bid Him come? The slow hours pass  
With cold unfriendly eyes. The feet of fear

Come down the echoing corridor; winds moan;  
A far door shuts. Oh God, how still they lie—  
Those mute and rigid forms—and I alone!

Forth from their dumb reproach I flee in dread,  
Back to familiar doorsteps and to dreams.  
Oh to forget them, to forget the dead!

## SONG OF THE PIONEER

NAY, not the safe and rutted road  
Where the halt and blind may plod,  
The Four Winds are His breath, He saith,  
I take to the open with God.

So many the lanes that lead somewhere!  
So many the gates ajar!  
I flee from them all to the woodland-deeps,  
Led by the morning star.

I roam in the secret, odorous way  
Where ne'er went foot before,  
Lured by the fluting pipes of Pan,  
And the thunder on the shore.

I follow the track of the mountain goat;  
I shepherd the hill-top sheep;  
Fireweed for wealth, wild-grape for wine,  
From rock to rock I leap

Up beetling crags to the snow-capped peaks  
Where outer spaces blow,  
Where the infinites pile to the throne of God,  
And the sea-tides rock below.

## Song of the Pioneer 109

O far from fixed and measured bounds  
For fenced and padded minds,  
I follow Him of the Wanderers,  
Strong Harvester of Winds.

Too many the men in the beaten paths!  
I blaze a trail untrod  
To a lonely grave in a primal world  
Where other men may plod.



## A WORLD OF DREAMS

OH is it true I count the blooms  
Upon the cherry-bough?  
Are these real yellow butterflies,  
And is this I, and thou?

Those rainbow waters, purple isles  
Are true? Or is the dream  
I dreamed last night a truer life,  
And do we only seem?

I mused on lofty spacious realms,  
Mad moods and projects high—  
A world of wraiths? Then what are we—  
These things called thou and I?

Are we frail haunted phantom ghosts,  
The world a spectered way?  
And do we live most in our dreams,  
Or in the dreaming day?

## “LET ME INTO THE DARKNESS AGAIN”

It has come at last—

Our meeting!

This my dream through all the past—

The lonely unshared years,

The yearning tears,

And now—our greeting!

How I have pictured it—my hour supreme—

Poor pitiful dream!

And now—I would forget

Our meeting—

This cold, strange farce—this greeting.

I would have back the dream,

The lonely unshared years,

The yearning tears.

Oh, God! I would forget

That we have met.

## THE STORM

WAILS and Wings and Woes whirl past  
The frightened shore; ships plunge and sink;  
Love's wreckage washes, and I and a drifting  
form

At the wave-worn brink.

"Poor little Hope," the Sphinx softly said,  
"You may hold her and kiss her, now she is  
dead."

The pitiless passion-winds toss her hair;  
Fierce frenzies beat on her quiet face;  
Soul of my soul—and her lips to my lips chill—  
God grant us grace!

What though calm seas sigh penitence?  
What though glad skies, new shores, there be?  
Say what, oh mocking fate, when Hope is dead,  
Are these to me?

"Poor little Hope," the Sphinx softly said,  
"You may hold her and kiss her, now she is  
dead."

## THE MANTLE OF THE YEARS

ATHIRST, anhungered, comfortless, alone,  
Despairing, yearning, worn with ceaseless fears—  
(Lo, the Gods laughed—I heard their sneers).

And then a surfeit—Life would fain atone;  
But habit is the mantle of the years—  
(Lo, the Gods weep—I feel their tears).

## REAL TROUBLES

YOUR eyes are masked to-day;  
    The skies are gray;  
Winds cry among the solitary trees;  
The dying embers sadden me to tears;  
A barrel organ stirs old memories  
    Of other years;  
The dull belated sunset seems a part  
    Of my defeated heart.  
My tattered chair, my faded tapestries,  
    My broken clock—ah so!  
        I know  
If you had kissed me all the world were gay  
    To-day.

### A SUMMONS

WISTARIAS ripple in purple waves,  
The plum is gay, the cherries blow,  
Gold butterflies doff to the first white rose,—  
So blue the skies and your eyes smile so!

Next spring-tide, dear, when you pluck the buds,  
My arms will be holden—do not weep!  
In the Everlastingness I'll know,  
And dream of our tryst in the stillest sleep.

## REPROACH

THOSE eyes! How they hurt me! I dread to  
gaze

In those younger eyes, their gladness sways

An older pitying self; I weep

That an outcast murdered hour may keep

Its ghosts to haunt the after days.

Those eyes! How they hurt me! I cannot gaze.

## TOO LATE

DENIAL past, Life comes to thee  
With hands held out to bless;  
Alas, thou hast no habitude  
To deal with happiness.  
Thou hast no measure for the full  
Of pleasures poured for thee,  
No chambers ready for the guest,  
No harps for revelry.

Joy lilts and flits and flutters by  
With thrones to give away;  
Thou canst not use a diadem,  
Thou hast no mind to play.  
The years toss flowers at thy feet,  
Love leaves a legacy,  
Days pipe, but thy lean impotence  
Keeps its Eternity.



## CHARITY

HATH the heart not alms for its palsied hours,  
A tear for its dungeon-bred?  
Do not weeping days dig gaping graves  
For their galleys of trampled dead?

Wouldst thou force to Scorn's mirror thy crip-  
pled Soul,  
Deny hope to a thing that lives?  
Can not Self forgive a red-stained Self  
As God Himself forgives?

## WHERE AND WHEN?

WHERE will your grave be,  
Where will it be?

Down 'neath the waves of the southern sea?  
Up in the north amid frozen snows?  
Under the pines and the mountain rose?  
In valley or wilderness, desert or park,  
Dug in the daylight, or dug in the dark?  
Shall sinister hands hide the body you know,  
Or will it in pomp and dignity go?

When will the day break,  
When will it break?

Will sunny skies shine or the wild thunders  
shake?

What last and wonderful word will you say?  
Who will be with you? How will you pray?  
Will you suddenly drop in the height of your  
power,

Or pass pulse by pulse, tardy hour by hour?  
Like master or slave will you pay your toll?  
May God have mercy upon your soul!

## JUDGMENT

WHAT will God say at Judgment Day?  
Condemn for sins that scarlet be,  
Or crown for all eternity?  
Nay, He will turn aside and say  
    "Take her away,  
She is not beautiful to see;  
A thousand lives to live has she  
Ere she from ugliness is free.  
When she to beauty wins her way,  
    Bring her to me."

## PASSING SOULS

ACROSS the stars float fleecy clouds,  
Past days, waiting in silver shrouds  
For their brothers gathering apace.

And the shadow passing the gold moon's light  
Is perchance a soul swept home to-night  
Where the star-winds leave no trace.

## ALONE

Oh Mother, Mother, I'm lonely apart,  
I'm frightened so when the night winds blow  
And the rain drips through my heart.

Oh Mother, Mother, don't you hear?  
Yes, the daisies are sweet that bloom at my  
feet,  
But oh I want you near.

Dear Mother, Mother, I'll try not fret,  
I'll dream it is night and you'll come with the  
light,  
And perhaps God won't let you forget.

## THE RACHMANINOFF PRELUDE

I HEAR the distant, far retreat,  
The ponderous tread  
Of the ancient dead,  
The ominous beat of invisible feet.  
I hear the undersong of death—  
Through darkling mists it echoeth  
In aching, desolate, haunting strains.  
I hear the Past stalk by in chains,  
I hear God's bugle thoughts resound,  
I hear the time-spurred ages tread  
Up steep, eternal hills that bound  
The unpent skies. And yet again  
That awful tread  
Of the ancient dead,  
Passing beyond man's trembling ken,  
And on and on,  
And fainter, farther, on and on,  
The beat of far retreating feet,  
The ponderous tread  
Of the ancient dead.

## ASE'S DEATH

(PEER GYNT SUITE)

Love grows dumb,  
Life turns numb,  
    With muffled steps I hear death come.

Chill joys stare,  
Old sins flare,  
    In scourging blasts my soul stands bare.

Terrors loom  
Down the gloom,  
    The way drags overlong to doom.

Worlds whirl by,  
Twilights fly,  
    In the swinging trough of the stars I lie.

Hither blown,  
Thither flown,  
    A sob forgot in the wide unknown.

On my breast  
Deathless rest  
    The slain red roses Love loves best.

Memories fade,  
Life's afraid,  
    And self goes out in glittering shade.

Drawing nigh,  
Gleaming high,  
    The Cross of Christ athwart the sky!

Let me go,  
Dreaming so—  
    He bent and smiled, His face I know.

Endless sleep,  
Tranquil, deep,  
    Where wide oblivions surge and sweep,

Surge and sweep,  
Asleep—  
    Asleep.



## THE BELLS

A CHEERFUL song from God goes up,  
His joy in the world He has made,  
In sea and mountain, in colour and sound,  
In earth and seed and blade.

But more than all His infinite realm  
From tree to rainbow span,  
The Lord exults in the curious arts  
And handiwork of man.

Ah, God is covered with blazing light,  
Ramparts and domes of flame,  
But His greatest glory is not when man  
Bows low before His name:

'Tis when in his strength and pride he comes  
And the work of his hands he tells,  
Then God is glad, but best of all  
He loves the beautiful Bells.

God marvels at cunning devices contrived  
To discover His secret will,  
Till His hid designs are an open book  
To guide men's crafty skill.

And He smiles to see as they grasp His plans  
How they use them as their own,  
But of Bells had the Great God never thought,  
The Bells man created alone.

And ever God hears them with fond delight  
As each its message tells;  
For best of all His children's works  
He loves the beautiful Bells.

## THE HUNT

CRASH and off and away together  
Over the moors and the purple heather,  
Over the moors in the golden weather!  
Huntsmen, gentlemen, hunters, all  
Loosed at last by the harbourer's call!  
Off and away! Like a swinging lash  
Two score pitiless staghounds crash  
Out through the broom with hot fixed eyes,  
And surer and clearer and deadlier rise  
Over the hills where the fresh track lies.

Hound to hound and horse to horse,  
Mile on mile through the yellow gorse,  
The scarlet coats, the bits agleam,  
The reeking flanks, the froth, the steam,  
The reddening spurs and the daring leap  
Down treacherous foothold of mountain sheep,  
Up perilous steep, from ledge to ledge,  
Around the covert and over the hedge,  
Through wooded coomb and baffling glen,  
Through glen and coomb—pack, hunters, and  
men!

Beyond, the lordly wild red Deer,  
Gaining the cliff where the rocks fall sheer,

Clears crag and chasm with breathless spring,  
 Wheels down the wind like a bird on wing—  
 Noble mile on mile with eyes on fire,  
 Noble mile on mile through ooze and mire,  
 Till his hide is black and his staunch limbs  
 tire!

At bay at last in brave defeat  
 On a rocky ledge where the waters meet  
 He turns on his foes with striking feet.

He rips a hound from flank to flank,  
 The stream runs red from bank to bank.  
 Hound after hound he grapples and turns,  
 With tossing crest he fends and spurns,  
 A death-trapped knight he fends and spurns.  
 Death-trapped! The white blade at his throat!  
 His proud head lowers, the hot hounds gloat,  
 His royal antlers are borne away,  
 A stately prize—brow, bay, and tray!

. . . . .

Had God walked over His hills to-day!

## A DIALOGUE

JEREMIAH. (*kneeling proudly*)

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Arise! Why kneel to one  
who envies thee?

JEREMIAH. Who envies me, O King? Me, desolate,

Defeated and in chains, a man of tears,

A voice lost on the wind, a staff forgot?

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Still, envied of a king.

JEREMIAH. Envied, my Lord?

NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Does velvet ease the gnawing  
of the heart?

For this the awful fury of thy faith—

Though I have many gods I know it not.

All passions have I known, all passions tried

Save this strange mastering passion after  
God.

Had I a thousand thrones all would I give,

Yea, hungry, thirsty, follow thee in chains

Could I like unto thee, be mad for Him.

ASK AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN  
UNTO YOU

RENDING the dark, Lucretius' cry,  
"No God is there to magnify!"  
Slowly annihilation crept  
Upon him and he gladly slept.

"Myself am heaven and hell." Content  
With cup and book old Omar went.

"Oh Father," Galileo prayed,  
"From sun to planet unafraid,  
O'erwhelmed by thousandfold surprise,  
Let me search out earth's each surmise.  
Behind the veil grant me to go  
Who have so long desired to know."  
The great astronomer afar  
Journeyed in glee from star to star.  
With heaven's guardian discussed  
Strange wonders of the ways of dust.

In glory Plato thundered past,  
Rang out, "I have found Him at last."

As each soul craves, so is it given,  
Annihilation, knowledge, heaven.

## FULFILMENT

PASSION—it was rounded  
By love's divinity;  
Love—its deeps I sounded—  
'Twas life's infinity;  
Life—'twas ever hounded  
By death's finality;  
Death—and lo! 'twas bounded  
By God's eternity.

## THE GUEST

DREAR we were and dull  
Till lo, you came!  
Our spirits rose to yours  
With wings of flame.  
Swift sparkling thoughts danced by,  
Wit flashed and flew,  
Jove bowed to Jove—a god  
Each smiling grew!



## TWO LIVES

FOR you the open seas, the world's highway,  
    Its vistas wide.  
FOR me an ancient tree to love, a brook  
    To lie beside.

## AT LAST

CARELESS as a butterfly  
Winged with levity,  
Till death lent his royal crown  
To give her dignity.

## MY CREED

BUT this my need—  
A Father in Heaven, a worthy work to do,  
And a mighty love for a noble heart and true—  
But this my creed.

## **FAME**

**A WHOLE** life lived in silence,  
Then one swift blossoming word  
Flung to a careless passer-by,  
And lo! the wide world heard.

### A DISCOVERY

I DID not know till he had gone  
What mother-love must bear;  
But now in every mother-face  
I see it written there.

## AMBITION

A FLEETING rose-bud crave eternal life,  
With its own loveliness unsatisfied?  
Is perfume of its passing not enough?  
Has one least rose-bud ever really died?

## TO-DAY

Cut off by the soul's refusals  
From future and past I see  
At last the daily miracles,  
The wayside Poesy.

The Tree of Time  
and  
Other Sonnets





# The Tree of Time

## I

### EACH ROOT TO SEPARATE DWELLINGS LED

ITS roots coiled round about eternity;  
Its branches covered space. Upon the ground  
White flocks and ploughs, heaped corn and  
fruits I found,  
And gifts of sandals, staves and ivory.  
With earthen wine-jars, singing joyously  
The potters brought their lamps, and crowned  
with leaves  
Boys bore the sacred baskets piled with sheaves,  
While healing blossoms fell perpetually.

As I my offerings made of blood and bread,  
Earth opened and beneath I saw the dead;  
Each sinuous root to separate regions led.  
Closed gates there were and realms too blinding  
bright;  
In some I paused not, filled with pious fright;  
These on my tablet writ gave grave delight.

## II

## THE PLACE OF HEROES

I saw the heroes rise and quaff. Above sharp grate of keel and grind of falling trees their armour clanked. With sword to hilt in flame each to his mother sang—these were their words.

LIKE brands ye laid us nightly in red heat,  
Unflinching plunged us, purged us pure by  
fire,

In secret hardened us—more stern than sire,  
Strong foods prepared for us—"So gods must  
eat,"

Sharp weapons gave to us and chargers fleet,  
By sacred legend spurred, by precept stayed,  
But most we drew our courage when ye prayed.  
Quaff to your Mothers, Heroes—on your feet!

So reared by godlike rules we grew in power  
Till swift descended our immortal hour  
By younger mothers for their babes foreseen.  
Arm failed not, heart quailed not, compact  
and clean

Our unsheathed spirits smote. Our victories!  
Quaff to your Mothers, Heroes—on your knees!

## III

## THE PLAYGROUND OF DEAD CHILDREN

It was always summer in the Playground of Dead Children and I stayed longest there.

SOFT moss grew here for tender stumbling  
feet;  
Low seats upon smooth rocks they found,  
spice-seeds  
And aromatic leaves for feasts. Gay beads  
They hunted hid in fragrant pods, and sweet,  
Tart berries far in witches' wild retreat.  
Brisk squirrels dropped them nuts, and water-  
reeds  
Piped gladly when they danced upon the meads;  
Birds brought them tidings, brooks conveyed  
their fleet.

'Twas always summer and the days were bright  
With brightness lost from homes bereft and  
dark.  
All seemed abundant glad, save when at night  
They wept for arms but dimly missed by day.  
Then singing-angels held them till the lark  
Bid all God's cherished children wake and  
play.

## IV

## THE ABODE OF YOUNG MAIDENS EARLY DEAD

Crowds of young maidens early dead I saw, like flowers  
garnered from the gardens of the world.

PALE, honey-pale, as they had dwelt too long  
In under-worlds, dusk's dim tranquillity  
Passed into them, they gaze forth broodingly  
From pomegranate glades of death. Roots  
strong  
And thick twine o'er the lintel where still  
throng  
The latest come, half-veiled in shining white,  
Each holding in her hands a twinkling light.  
Nor hate nor love they know, nor any wrong.

So sad their song: "We were too young to  
weep,  
Too young to sin." Bright Beatrice leans  
On Dante's missal, vexing strange and deep.  
Stern Jephthah's daughter wan narcissus  
gleans.  
"Dance! Dance!" they cry, "till swift life-  
shadows fall."  
"Too young to love," they sing, "we have  
missed all."

## V

## THE REALM OF UNHOLY LOVERS

Many familiar faces I saw in the Realm of Unholy Lovers, but it was a sinister place and I came soon away.

DESERTED pedestals and void recess,  
Dimmed haloes lost — Love's lovers stood  
aghast  
With widened eyes—now they discerned at last  
What love had cost. Heloise cried, "My  
distress  
Were gentle price for Abelard's caress!"  
Isolde clung to Tristan, "Our sweet past!"  
But Launcelot bowed his head, and others cast  
Sad eyes aside in shame and wretchedness.

Bright Magdalen leaned o'er the Holy Well,  
Pale crocus-gold her hair, her eyes on high  
In adoration strangely pure. "I dwell  
Beneath God's glance." Light shone upon her  
head,  
And many kneeled and some hid from His eye.  
"Our sins are stepping stones to Him," they  
said.



## VII

## THE SANCTUARY OF YOUNG MOTHERS

Dark it was and sad, I did not stay.

FOREVER unappeased, bereft they pace  
Or back or forth save when by grief o'ercome  
They sink upon the Stone of Sorrow dumb  
And still, fixed inward eyes upon one face,  
Dim unheard voices filling all the place.  
By idle hands unheeded, cobwebbed lie  
Unfinished tasks—so quickly did they die,  
From cradle vigil snatched, from fond embrace.

With long thoughts steeped in unreturning years,  
Denied the future, "Lo, our part is o'er.  
No more," they cry, "may we dry bitter tears  
Of those we love, or serve or shield or spare.  
Nought can we do but pray unceasing prayer—  
Life incomplete, uncrowned forever more."



## DIONYSUS

The winter were-wolf 'twixt the Festivals of the Wine-  
press and the Flowers.

FORGOT winged words mid foldings of the hills,  
The flower-enkindled woodlands, fountains deep  
In rocky caves, the fleecy grazing sheep;  
Forgot the fragrant vintage, faun-loved rills;  
Forgot wild music of the reeds, quick thrills  
Of tingling tree-tops many-voiced, swift leap  
Of fire in veins; forgot while poisons creep  
And slow his emptied soul with madness fills.

Then as a Hunter, wine-enraged, he smites  
Lone farms upon far snowy Thracian heights,  
Wolf-fanged devours the aged, blood-stained  
tears

Fair limbs of boys, no maid or matron spares.  
Till winter-frenzy past, grief-stricken, sane,  
And beautiful, he brings the Spring again.

## KEATS

TORCH of Apollo—wrapt in sudden blaze,  
Thy swift soul spent itself—immortal light,  
While siren music from Olympus' height  
Poured from thy stirring heart its wingèd praise  
To beauty, truth, and gods. Thy fever plays  
With flashing gleams upon our quickened sight.  
As meteor-trail, thy passing in its flight  
Scatters great sparks of life. Compelled, we  
gaze  
With thee into the starry realms of space  
Whence come thy songs inspired to haunt the  
race.  
Thy name was "writ in water"? Nay, thy  
name  
Is writ across the century in flame.  
Cloud-hid, anon it cleaves the dark asunder  
And lingers with an after-sense of thunder.

## AMIEL'S GARDEN

His Garden! His bright candelabra trees  
En fête! His lilacs steeped in joy! His sky  
Limpid and blue! The same flecked shadows  
lie

Athwart this path he paced. His reveries  
Float in the air. His moods, his ecstasies  
Still linger charmed. Pale butterflies flit by—  
Were one his soul it had not found on high  
Banquet more choice than those infinities  
He daily knew. And now no one to hear  
The hovering hours, the singing grass, to feel  
The wrinkles of the soul smooth out, to see  
God's shadow bend down from eternity  
His garden empty! Yet I gently steal  
Lest I disturb his dreams still smiling near.

## A NATION'S POVERTY

MEN die unmourned in these swift latter days  
With scanty prayer and scarce a spoken word,  
Rich fruited lives unheeded, deeds unheard.  
An age ashamed of honest grief and praise,  
That counts them fulsome, having none, a jest,  
That grudges time to weep a hero slain,  
Is paltry, cheap, ignoble, pinched and vain.  
A hero honoured is a nation blest.

Worse is an age with no great men to crown,  
No pasts to cherish and no shrines to build,  
That has no heroes fallen, hopes fulfilled,  
No deeds to sing, its every altar down.  
Corrupt it is, inter it earth to earth;  
When death is nothing, life is little worth.

## THE POET

A DREAMER he, one fed on cloud and star,  
Who dwells above the throng that comes and  
goes,

Yet feels the hidden anguish of our woes,  
The pain, the hopeless tragedy that mar,  
The pathos and the mystery that bar  
Our powers. Who scorns Life's shams and  
empty shows,

And unconfused, serene, brave-hearted knows  
The strength and glory of the days that are.

Who having ears hears silent, ceaseless roll  
The deeper undercurrents of the soul;  
Who having eyes sees everywhere the sign,  
Symbol and promise of a world divine.  
The Singer's voice is his—a soul-swept lyre—  
The Seer's gaze, the Prophet's heart of fire.

## SLEEP

TIME's ancient benediction, gentle sleep;  
The miracle and mystery of the years,  
Perchance the surge and sweep from other  
    spheres,  
Wide worlds of sweet forgetting. Surge and  
    sweep  
Perchance of tidal wave from far-off deep  
Of God's remembered life. From some dim  
    shore,  
Unheard amid the day's insistent roar,  
Float vague strange echoes that divinely keep  
A mystic sense of Presence in our breast,  
A sense of soul-paths through the star-strewn  
    haze  
Where dimly glide the shadows of the days.  
There, Sphinx-like, brooding o'er eternal ways,  
The Spirit's Hospice stands, where each may  
    rest  
Enfolded in the infinite—God's guest.

## COMPENSATION

A SOMBRE spell upon my spirit lies.  
Far off upon the levels of the past  
Dimly I feel a shadow faintly cast  
Athwart the golden noon of my emprise.  
(I will not gaze, I close my heart, my eyes.)  
The shadow comes apace, around me sweeps.  
I choke in its chill mist, my spirit weeps,  
For death of love doth it not symbolize?

Then through the pain I feel the touch of light  
As starlight on white lilies grows more white.  
The shadow softly stirs, bright wings unfold,  
Transfigured stands God's Angel; I behold  
His patient eyes. What though the pain abide?  
The shadow holds the Angel at my side.

## HOPE

HOPE is the victor's armour, strong to bear  
The thrusts of fortune, charmed, immune from  
harm.

Hope thine, thou shalt not traffic with alarm  
Nor harvest bitterness. Hope rends the snare  
Of crafty days. A master, swift to dare,  
Leads Life in halter, coerced as a slave.  
The great wear its insignia. The brave  
Enter its promised country unaware.

Wings to the weary, glory in the gloom,  
Hope bids the body turn e'en from the tomb.  
Healing is in it, nourishment and sleep.  
Oh little children, all else failing, keep  
This one God-cable to the unseen shore,  
Hope against hope, and hopeless, hope once  
more.



## FEAR NOT

Not for to-day, oh little one, I write,  
But later when life's glory is gone out  
In stress of strife, in agony, in doubt,  
When stern endurance falters and the fight  
With self seems lost and acrid troubles bite  
Into thy very soul, then Dear One, hear!  
Above all else thou fearest, most fear Fear.  
Take thou my password, whisper it at night.

Fear is a smouldering fire, a venom'd dart.  
Fear is a wolf to gnaw the timorous heart.  
Upon it treads death's red-fanged hound dis-  
ease.

Go forth, serene, undaunted, undismayed,  
So shalt thou master all thy destinies.  
He only conquers who fights unafraid.

# **The Homestead**

**A Legacy of Memories**



# The Homestead

## THE HOME

(TO G. A. B.)

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers  
have set.—Prov. xxii, 28.

SAVE godly children no man leaves the world  
A goodlier gift than an established Home,  
Wherein the future generations keep  
Their growing heritage of love and faith.  
For Home is founded on the rock of love.  
Its walls are wrought of faith, its tower of pride,  
Its door of courtesy. A gentle trust  
Looks out of every window, and its chairs  
Are comfortable as are no stranger's chairs.  
Its chambers hold old lullabies and ring  
With ancient frolic, and its roof-tree guards  
Places of tears and tender sorrows shared.

Life waxed and waned, the earth a temple was,  
And this our Home enshrined the altar fire.  
Here tragedies of birth and love and death  
Were played, as it would seem the world itself  
These shabby curtains daily rose upon.

Here heaven was for those who yearned for it.  
Here genius did great things with simple ease,  
And talent lesser tasks by industry.  
Here kindly age put on fresh garb of youth,  
And youth spun its own thread of destiny.  
They ate and drank, they bought and sold and  
died,

Those sires of mine, but above all they lived.  
I am the voice of their young hearts, old thoughts.  
And speech has wings, and I must thither go  
Where they knew not. Yet I draw sustenance  
From springs they knew, and lessons they began  
I finish easily. Here daily come  
Echoes of them; their unremembered lives  
Uplift or hamper. Oftentimes I start  
As some illusive shadow of their mind  
Recedes and fades among vague memories.  
Again sharp contests rend me; racial feuds  
That took their rise in other lands and times  
In phantom battle tear my helpless will.  
Sometimes I do not know myself—it seems  
A stranger looks at me from mirrored eyes,  
And flitting ghosts and apparitions steal  
A transient stronghold in my inmost self.  
Anon in direst need, when failure stares,  
Within my veins out of that brave old Past  
A sudden courage runs, a fearlessness  
Born of a thousand conquests, and I rise  
And conquer in the name of those dead sires.  
And oft distraught by din of sordid ways

There comes a gradual peace and calm, the  
poise

Of some forgotten life rooted in prayer.

So I press on hot-hearted with their faith

To bear the high traditions of our house

And humbly to bequeath to future days

Those qualities that time and circumstance

May ripen into some perfected fruit.

## THE GATE-POSTS

GATE-POSTS forestall the waiting kith within  
In words of welcome, stand with open arms  
To bid you enter, graciously confer  
New dignities upon you—host or guest—  
Each a distinction honourably defined.  
Gate-posts have character and subtly give  
Some inkling of the inmates of the house  
And intimation of events to come.  
Brave masks they wear to him who passes by.  
Keepers of secrets, they oft feign a pride  
Even in fortunes fallen to decay.  
They to the outcast lift forbidding hands,  
Unto the wanderer speak security.  
The envious beggars curse them, and the poor,  
Unsummoned, pass them by with wistful eyes.  
Strange gate-posts bid the traveler hesitate  
In apprehension or expectancy.  
Those of a friend a password give of peace—  
The honest welcome of unconscious things.  
So doth it much behoove a man to pause  
Attentive to these symbols of the home  
Ere he entrust himself to enter in.

## THE DOORSTEP

HEED thou the Doorstep, threshold to the world,  
That vague and troublous world which vampire-  
like

Has drawn its yearly tribute o'er these steps,  
Or tempting as a fevered dream enticed.  
The very blossoms of wistaria  
About the portal breathe expectancy.  
The knocker smiles as it would welcome you  
To delicate attentions graciously.  
It is a place of handclasps and farewells,  
Of kisses and the last slow look of love  
That haunts the heart forever and survives  
Life, death, and time, yea even love itself;  
A place for news to come, kind words to go,  
For bounteous courtesy and valiant tears,  
For glad and grave surprises, plighted troths,  
For eyes to watch unwearied through the years,  
Too sad for weeping—hope's despairing watch—  
Sadder than death the steps that do not come!  
Here mothers part with sons and turn to face  
A homeless home, and little children gaze  
With wistful wonder on the hills forbid.  
A gravity it hath which doth compel  
The traveler's feet even from utmost earth—  
So different from all other doors our own!



Through weal or woe the wren sings gladlier  
here,  
The cricket cheerier chirps, the old bell's voice  
Rings comfortably across the quiet hills.  
The swaying pines, the lilies, and the rose  
Hedge round about the doorway like a ring  
Wherein we, left, cling closer hand in hand.  
Its sill is worn with feet that come and go—  
Pilgrims into the world, pilgrims returned—  
And they who one by one pass out detached,  
Aloof, with a strange smile and folded hands.  
The Doorstep doth command Eternity.

## THE HEARTH

SEEK first the Hearth, 'tis as a glowing heart  
To gather friends, to whom men come for  
warmth

In a chill world, find hospitality  
And lodging, and fare forth cheered mightily.  
The Hearth is boon companion to who will;  
Hath quality of life, and as the sun  
Revivifies the jaded minds of men.  
The wounded spirit finds sweet solace here,  
For virtue issues forth from it that heals  
Like merry medicine. No one may leave  
The hearth-fire as he came. Before it men  
Do sit with staring eyes and inward see  
Such shadows of themselves distorted play  
As makes the sorriest sinner pose a saint,  
And saint the veriest culprit out of hell.  
The fool loves not the embers, nor the knave,  
For fire-light spies upon the knave and frights  
The fool. Wrath melts before it, madness flees,  
Craving the dark in which dark spirits dwell.  
At brightest hearths the fewest words there be.  
Here gentle friendships richest fruitage bear,  
Wit, blaze for blaze, gives back Promethean  
flame,  
And generous confidence unbidden speaks.

Deep meditations have sweet savour here,  
And wisdom comes to us at firesides.  
So is the Hearth the altar of the home,  
And men will ever love the element  
Which guards the dear traditions of the house  
And links each generation with the next.

## THE LIBRARY

"I have sought repose everywhere, and have only found it in a little corner, with a little book."

ST. FRANÇOIS DE SALES.

Is anything so good as to return  
After a bookless visit to one's books?  
To seek one's own accustomed easeful place,  
Snow-girt without, the blazing logs within;  
The mullioned window gay with daffodils;  
Books on the window seat, and close at hand  
Low tables full of them; and this new book  
That waits enticingly—a choice event—  
What if it prove the Book of Books for me?  
I chide myself for giving to new books  
That of myself should go to make new friends.  
For somehow living books do seem more dear  
Than many I have called by name of friend.  
It is enough ofttimes to lay one's hand  
Upon a well-loved book and feel its power  
Electric thrill. Ofttimes a casual glance  
Between old covers lets great spirits loose  
And so surrounds me with familiar forms  
I know not if myself am one of them  
Or they the jostling wraiths of life itself.  
Sequestered days are days wherein we grow;  
When fresh ideas grind blunt wits sharp again;

When splendid bursts of bloom surprise the  
mind

And take enchanted colours from the soul;  
When thoughts detached and vague slowly  
emerge,

Become ours to dispose of as we will,  
And richly nurtured by immortal books,  
Make us akin to lofty master minds.  
So, welcome, hermit days as days of gold,  
To spend apart in a Great Company.

## THE PANTRY

WHAT of the Pantry, when for you and me  
The world was bounded by rich marmalades?  
Brave rows and rows, shelves laden high and low,  
Red quince and currant, raspberry and plum,  
Spiced peach for company, wild cherry-bounce  
For Christmas and Thanksgiving, old receipts  
Boasting a century of toothsome use.  
Can you not smell the fragrant boiling grapes,  
See the great baskets heaped with luscious pears,  
The tables piled with cherries you must pit,  
Brass cauldrons full of things delectable,  
Hot pepper-sauce, an heirloom yearly wrought,  
Most memorable of all household events?  
And best of all the Mother queening it,  
Absorbed, with shining eyes and busy hands,  
Directing, measuring, tasting, all intent?  
Realities of service and home-cheer  
To notch the memory with happiness!

## THE BACK STAIRS

I WOULD not like to tell how oft I raced  
Up dark Back Stairs, a Something after me;  
What giants hid within the deep black oven;  
What stealthy goblins by the woodhouse crept;  
What troubles life held when pet-turtles crawled  
Into the dairy, and night made the churn  
A hideous mumbling hag, and creaking boards  
Sent crinkles down my spine, and things behind—  
Oh very close behind—clutched out until  
My hair stood up and I just turned—and ran!

## THE ATTIC

I LOVE the Attic, dim, mysterious,  
Where, unadorned, the house, unmasked and  
grave,  
Shows bare and bald. No frivolous paint, no  
touch  
Ornate and profligate to garnish age.  
Its skeleton rafter-ribs, its hollow eaves  
And powdered dust it wears with dignity.  
Antiquity is wise and dares be bold  
In its unvarnished worth. Here no contempt,  
No ruthless ignorance of the past has place.  
Go softly in, old age claims reverence.  
Yet here and there youth shows its passionate  
face.  
From letters, silken robes, and trifles gay  
Cry out a thousand gleeful voices glad  
With joy of life: "We are the chrysalis  
Of human hearts, they dying, we remain."  
That idle distaff and this cradle here  
Speak epitaph more plain than rain-worn words  
On crumbling gravestone yonder on the hill.



## THE SILVER TEA-SET.

THE worth of things lies not within themselves  
But in such thoughts as they do move us to.  
A trifle made by fond remembrance dear  
The costliest substitute cannot replace.  
How personal the dower of the dead!  
Their relics virtue have and things they loved  
A sanctity that fain would move our tears,  
And so remembers us of their sweet charm  
We cannot credit matter outlives soul.

Thus hath this Silver Service potency,  
Availing much to keep tradition green,  
Like as a symbol passed from sire to son.  
And she who last reigned o'er it, queen of  
queens—

I used to think I'd paint her as she sat  
Behind the Silver Tea-set pouring tea.  
She always looked as she had just stepped down  
From a great portrait in the billiard hall.  
Her white hair fell in curls each side her brow  
Whereon was sweetly written "Motherhood."  
Brave eyes she had and gentle courtly mien,  
And she was stately as she should command.  
I was not quite afraid of her, but kept  
My childish eyes upon her steadfastly.

Skilled was she in all noble household arts  
(And every day there were sweet rusks for me).  
We drank from rare blue cups that somehow  
seemed

Insignia of caste and like herself  
The fit associate of patriots.

I never see blue porcelain anywhere  
But brings beloved figures from the past,  
Old feasts, old frolics, voices long since hushed,  
Bright bubbling kettle, scent of steaming tea,  
And visions of the faces at the board.  
Thus did her children's children homage pay,  
And with their tea they drank her faith, her  
pride—

A glad and daily sacrament of Love.

## THE MIRRORS

BEREFT the house without its ancient glass,  
Where pass, repass, and do enact themselves,  
Albeit mockingly, forgotten scenes  
For those with eyes to see and hearts to heed.  
My ancient mirrors are of motley sort  
And curious legends oft I read therein.

The Old Gold Oval in the morning-room  
Is for the fair of face, where softly pass  
Frail Greuze-like flower-children, that do leave  
Bright joyous smiles of innocence therein.  
Gay dancers glide to airs of old Rameau;  
Still ditties made by motion audible  
Float out to me from silent harpsichord,  
With fragrance of sweet roses long since dead.  
Oft plainer than peruke or shining sword  
I see masked hearts that fain would hide their  
hurt.

Faces look out and eyes I seem to know  
Flash back like thoughts to mine—some ancient  
sire

Who thought my thoughts in some lost century—  
And here a lip familiar, there a brow,  
Until it seems that I myself am one  
Of that dim vanished company who have  
No more existence save in mirror here.

The Square Glass in mahogany enshrines  
 The very Puritan of Puritans.  
 Such eagle eyes do dwell within its depths  
 As would command new worlds arise, and give  
 Even unto hell the soul for conscience sake.  
 How stiff the starch, how straight the spine, how  
 still  
 They sit on Sunday sofas learning Psalms  
 And writing constitutions with their blood!

The Shabby Mirror with the painted top  
 (A wavering glass to mortify the flesh)  
 Gives back the Past as troubled dreams give  
 back  
 The troubled days, wherein as moving trees  
 That darkly sway traditions move so real  
 I scarce distinguish them from memories.

By curious chance a foolish Rose-wreathed  
 Glass  
 Of gilded cupids, garlands, lovers' knots,  
 Invites most graciously, rococo-wise,  
 A Watteau shepherdess, a Louis Quinze—  
 A boudoir toy and intimate of queens  
 To deck blue tapised wall by fragile Sèvres,  
 Now staidly hung beside a hair-cloth couch.  
 Yet do I find even in this cold clime  
 Some pretty vanities recorded there,  
 Easy withal to match a mood unto!

The Carven Mirror in the lower hall  
Hangs as it used when age was young and gay,  
And Love looked last within and turned to die.  
How long it grieves—that last long look of  
death!

So do the mirrors of my homestead hold  
A mimic stage, whereon for me are played  
With measure for my pleasure, such old scenes  
As do embarrass me with endless guests,  
And fill the house with most strange company.

## THE PORTRAITS

LIFE-DOCUMENTS are they, enduring seal  
Of days forgot, of sweet and bitter things  
Which yet no voice speaks forth to vindicate.  
Once flesh and spirit, who needs ask thy deeds,  
When as transcendent light through glowing  
    veil

Thy naked soul shines through obliterate paint?  
Thy inmost secrets, guarded cunningly  
By life's quick parry, skillful quip and jest,  
Stand forth unshrinking, limned indelibly.  
I turn, lest too inquisitive I probe  
Past gracious mien to find a bruised heart!

Yet must I glance once more at this brave lad  
Who wistful looks at life he never lived  
With that strange immortality of youth  
Shining from fearless eyes. Oh bright dead Boy  
Why do I love you so? Shall I some day  
Be mother to a little son like you?

## THE CLOCKS

THE three grandfather clocks, one on each floor,  
Dispute the endless hours continually.  
One shrill as any shrew complains at night,  
By daylight rants and raves discordantly.  
One pompous, as 'twould strut about and boast,  
Chimes clarion challenge boldly through the  
house.

The third clock at my door is my close friend  
And ever shares my life. Ofttimes it strikes  
A noble note of triumph for the morn,  
A splendid note of joy to rouse the soul.  
It can be vehement, exalted, brave;  
Uplifts my heart in psalms of thankfulness;  
Is often anxious, as in sympathy;  
Has frequent wistful questions, warnings, hints,  
And strangely knows my troubled bitterness;  
Oft in denunciation strikes, severe;  
Direct it speaks the truth to me and calls  
My outraged stubborn passion by its name;  
Then pleading as a friend, and sorrowful  
Or tender, patient as a mother might,  
It gently soothes my blind and dumb distress—  
“Rest—child, rest—child,” until I fall asleep.

At night how loud they tick, how faithfully!  
What company they are! Tried family friends

Who watch the generations come and go,  
And so well know to strike the Hour of Birth,  
And knowing wait and wait to strike for Death—  
That strangely certain fate that somewhere bides  
Inexorable, inevitable, and sure;  
To which as to a fixed and final goal  
Man goes, or young, or gay, or sad, or old;  
Nor shrinking saves, nor fear, nor blinded eyes—  
For some a warning note, for some no hint.  
Yet stroke by stroke the moment nearer draws,  
And without haste the busy clocks chime on,  
And wait and wait to strike the Hour of Death  
With scarce a different tone to mark the end.



## THE COACH

WHEN distant church-bells chimed across the  
fields,  
We children felt a sense of holiday,  
As stiff in Sabbath starch we watched the team  
Prance from the stables, scorn the daily gear,  
And trot to carriage-house, where stood in state  
The shining Coach, unwrapped from linen case—  
A peerless treasure making sermons seem  
Fine as buff broadcloth seat on which we rode,  
Things to endure for dear tradition's sake,  
Adding much austere virtue to our pride.  
Rolling through quiet billows of the hills,  
Each well-loved tree and boulder by the road  
That bore a personal beauty all the week  
Seemed strange and in some unfamiliar scene.  
The beat of horses' feet kept time with hymns.  
We felt a part of some staid grown-up tale,  
Until the coachman reined at stepping-stone,  
And pomp and texts were through with for the  
week.

## THE TOOL-HOUSE

CAST not the eye of scorn on humble things,  
Ye folk of lace and lavender, not born  
To reckon wealth by old door-knobs, or know  
The miser-love that gloats upon a screw.  
Tarry not here, it is no place for you.  
But ye with eyes to see, who understand  
The greedy joy of finding a chance nut,  
Who note a plank as weather-wise the sky  
And guard a horse-shoe as some guard a book,  
Come with me to the Tool-house by the hill,  
Lovers of spicy cedars, tingling pines.  
No need to search, the spirit runs before  
To find the goodly shelter of old thoughts.  
No cobwebbed corner but is part of me,  
For here awoke life's laughter in the heart  
And mirth whose end was heaviness and tears.  
That grindstone whirled to sweet Sicilian airs  
Of old Theocritus, or yet again  
Ground out stern laws of life, those laws wise age  
With gentle pity later strove to blunt.  
The sun-gilt tools seemed golden daggers hung  
In deep Arabian cavern; genii hid  
Beneath the shavings there—I feel them yet,  
And all expectant turn this way and that  
As I were entered in a magic room  
In half-forgotten, half-remembered tale.

Who'd sack a Tool-house and dismantle it  
Would sack a city and betray a friend.  
Who'd cast its cherished life-loved treasures out,  
Mock it as rubbish, and despise its hoard,  
Would trample hearts and jeer at love itself—  
A pigmy soul too dwarfed for reverence,  
Its cruel crudeness unabashed before  
The slow accumulation of the years,  
The things of life and love and common needs  
That are no longer things, but have become  
Part of the human family, taken on  
A something of the sanctity of life.

## TRADITIONS

TRADITIONS are that part of us we keep  
To shield us from the present and protect  
The pith and savour of our native mind;  
Are in the blood and will betray themselves  
Like hidden perfumes or a secret love;  
Oft dwarf us and as oft give strength and poise  
To save us in despair; are to the heart  
Uplift and limitation. Character  
Is wrought upon them as flesh clothes the spine.  
Touch-stone and measuring rod are they to life.  
Man blinded by them oft deceives himself,  
Then finds in them a crutch to pick his way.  
So are they hard to drop, and obstinate  
Cling to men's nature dearer than all else.

## THE SPRUCE

As the days of a tree are the days of my people.

Isaiah lxx., 22.

WITHOUT the homestead every nook reports  
The history of my heart, from busy creek  
And restless swirl of waterfall to sweep  
Of green-patched farmlands steeply climbing up  
The mountain we have writ our lives upon.  
They share my life—the hazy valley dark  
With hint of hills, the sculptured forest line,  
The marching poplars pale as stricken dreams,  
The flowering chestnuts, neighbors to the barns,  
The giant lilacs, dragon haunt where I,  
A child, fought mimic battles, played the rocks  
Were dungeon-keep, where oft heart-sore I hid  
When sick with shame—strange hurt to ponder  
on.

There I went chasing golden butterflies,  
And, loving wings, flew through the waves of  
light

To travel with the sun a little child  
Of dreams. There every word inflated built  
Enchanted castles in the air that seemed  
More real than realer things I know today.

These cedars, proud ancestral towers that point  
Like fingers unto God, fit scaffold are

For life's background, that elemental need  
Demanded by the soul. But most to me  
Is this great wind-worn immemorial spruce,  
An epic playing part with all my sires.  
It is the tree of trees which somehow gives  
Distinction and stability to life,  
Which fallen the very place itself would die,  
And faith uprooted wither and decay.  
This tree is mine and doth possess me as  
Possessions ever own their owner; so  
I lie beneath its sheltering shade content  
With this my axis of the whirling earth.

## THE KNOLL

(At Harvest Time)

GOODLY it is to seek the woodland knoll,  
To part the tangled shoots of sassafras  
And push through bitter-sweet and juniper.  
Wild fragrant grapes and golden honeycombs,  
Nuts and ripe blackberries give lavish cheer.  
Afar I see the reapers in the wheat,  
The tired horses tread the cider-press.  
Through boughs shine yellow haycocks on the  
    hill,  
Unwinnowed grain heaps high the threshing  
    floor,  
Below me apples weigh the trees to earth,  
Pears lie upon the ground, plums scent the air,  
White willows wave above me, elms and oaks,  
And somewhere near hid locusts drone of frost,  
Of winter-burials and frozen streams,  
And overhead wide flocks of birds fly south.

## THE ORCHARD

STRAIGHT rows of trees that scan from any point,  
With breezy space for moving silences;  
A thin bright stream that glitters through green  
boughs

And whitens with the blossoms in the spring,  
Where little naked feet may splash unseen.  
Thickets of elder circle like an arm  
Lest cornfields press, and hedge of hazel-nuts,  
Full of sweet flutings, scarce knows if it be  
Girdle of poppiéd wheat or orchard fringe.  
See there the rutted ox-trail zigzags through,  
Cutting the corner by smoke-house and trough,  
Where like an eye the ancient elm stares 'round,  
And munching cows reach over sagging gates  
To nibble lustily the apples hung  
A tantalizing tooth-length from a bite.

I love my Martha trees and like to go  
And sit among them learning many things;  
A serving sisterhood, too busy far  
To scorn the idle Marys lost in dreams.  
As old friends in new light new aspects wear  
They ever changing, ever changeful seem.  
See how they lean from cruel northern winds,  
As hearts from unkind words, the gnarled bent  
trees



Like gnarled old women knitting in the sun;  
Or nodding branch to branch, as friend to friend,  
They whisper secrets, chatting genially;  
Or hand in hand as in an ancient dance,  
Swinging to harpsichord of worlds unknown,  
They croon of harvests, sickle-moons forgot,  
Of all dead birds that somewhere still sing on,  
Of all quenched fireflies, lost honey-bees.

The Orchard is man's ally; from of old  
Has ever been his stanch and faithful serf.  
In loneliest countries apple-boughs proclaim  
A shack hid somewhere, and no home's complete  
Without its mid-May orchard white with bloom.

Go plant an orchard if you want a friend.

## THE PLOT OF SIMPLES, HERBS AND PLEASANT FRUITS

"All things out of a garden either of salads or fruits,  
a poor man will eat better, that has one of his own, than  
a rich man that has none."

PUSH wide the gate—three sagging steps lead  
down

To old-world spices, treasured herbs bequeathed  
To pleasure us, to solace and restore,  
Oft grudged of honour, yet beloved withal  
As uncouth, homely friend we call in need  
And straight forget till ill hap next beset.  
An aromatic spot where none marks grace  
Of ragged-lady, sings rosemary's praise;  
Yet like to goodly thoughts they gladden hearts  
And right thing in right place delight the eye.

On all sides flourish peaches, generous plums,  
Red raspberries and currants, luscious pears.  
Bees drone about the hives, cool waters purl,  
And all the air is sweet with opulence  
Of summer scents and songs of flitting birds.  
Here pot-herbs thrive and savory salletings,  
Mustards and gingers hot as stinging words,  
And bitter boneset likest gall of hate.

Search out the cherished simples half o'ergrown,  
Charmed Juno's tears, the witches' herb o' grace.  
Pluck thee an armful of the blue monkshood,  
Tall gentian and the bright wild alum-buds.  
Cull cowslip flowers and scarlet hops to spice  
Thy sun-gold ales. A blessed thistle seek  
Lest treasons come upon thee unaware.  
Do scorpions gnaw thy brain? Wormwood has  
fangs.  
Art fiend-sick and accurst? Steep baleful hemp  
And mandrake leaves in drowsy jasmine wine.  
Drink till stars choke thee and the void floods  
by.

A little earth, a little rain, lo, blooms  
That wither veins, seeds breeding sleep,  
Fabled narcotics sweet as thoughts of death,  
And all here doled as hap or ill requires.

## THE GARDEN

OLD gardens have a language of their own,  
And mine sweet speech to linger in the heart.  
A goodly place it is and primly spaced,  
With straight box-bordered paths and squares of  
bloom.

Bay-trees by rows of antique urns tell tales  
Of one who loved the gardens Dante loved.  
Magnolias edge the placid lily-pool  
And flank the sagging seat, whence vista leads  
To blaze of rhododendrons banked in green.  
Azaleas by the scarlet quince flame up  
Against the lustrous grape-vines trellised high  
To pigeon-cote and old brick wall where hide  
First snowdrops and the bravest violets.  
A place of solitudes whose silences  
Enfold the heart as an unquiet bird.

## MAY

HERE spring by spring I seek my old-time  
friends,  
The wind-swept lilacs and the dew-drenched  
ferns,  
The bleeding-hearts, planted by some slim girl  
An age ago and like to her young dreams.

I wonder did she plan the peony-path  
Arched o'er by snowballs, dogwood boughs  
    en fête;

If lilies-of-the-valley then as now  
Mounted to that gold frieze of daffodils  
Gleaming beneath the honeysuckle-wall?  
Perchance these ranks of purple iris sprang  
From some old cherished root of her hid pride,  
For so pride flowers and valour lifts its head.  
Each greets me from its own accustomed place,  
Dear changeless friends who in a changing world  
Give permanence and most sweet sense of home.

The eager pansies eye me as I stray  
'Twixt blooms the poets and all lovers love,  
Where half mysterious abides a sense  
Of something happening. The soul expands;  
Wistaria breaks into my repose—  
A luscious sweet to reconcile the heart  
To wintry ways. I half expect a note  
Of elfin music from the hyacinths.  
The festal bluebells put my mind in tune.  
Primroses catch the heart as fancies should  
And shift and sway the mood deliciously.  
The clouds give me an airy quality.  
I feel elate because the tulips bloom,  
Wild-roses blow, and blithe narcissus watch  
Their dainty shadows nodding in the sun.  
It is a place of flowers, sweet to be,  
With just a humming-bird for company.

## JUNE

*The Rose Garden*

JUNE roses have a dialect their own—  
Go tiptoe softly, bend thy heart to hear—  
See roses, roses, roses everywhere  
As Sappho would have loved to walk among.  
From darkling ivy tender buds shine out  
Like youth immortal in an old, old face.  
Tall damask rose-trees circle spaciously.  
Rash tangled prairie roses clamber high  
To meet the wild sweetbriar o'er the wall  
Where smouldering cherries ripen in the sun.  
Below run dewy borders of the yellow rose,  
By fluting birds besieged with gifts of song—  
A song for every wind-plucked petal dropped  
In glittering amber from some golden age—  
Sweet thefts whereon spring touch by touch has  
traced  
Her passions in the colours of the sun.

At farthest bounds an ancient dial there is  
By pale moss-roses twined and garlanded.  
'Tis here the Greater Gardener comes at night  
To smile and ponder on man's handiwork  
So craftily engrafted on His own.  
(I used to think white roses loved Him best,  
Their faces glowed so reminiscent, glad.)

A wilderness of roses! Jealously  
They crowd about the moss-edged trickling  
spring  
That unforgetting sings the hours away  
As in remembered days—a ceaseless song,  
Giving the sadness of bright things that fade  
A fleeting sense of everlastingness.  
Enchanted shelter girt with quietness,  
Nor ever stranger foot should enter in.  
The vanished days hide here and shadows hold  
Voices and laughter of the long ago,  
Until I seem back safe in pinafores,  
Picking the roses for the old rose-jar.

## JULY

As shadows slant behind tall Gothic firs  
And clustered gables sharpen in the West  
'Tis good to stroll among sweet odours here,  
The soft breeze buffeting the scents about—  
Bewildering episodes to stir the soul.  
Spiced lavender with rose-geranium drifts,  
Filling the heart as it were empty vase.  
Lemon-verbena, crossing heliotrope,  
Eddies with mignonette fantastically.  
Sweet peas reluctant to the clove-pinks yield,  
Jasmine to cedar, strange mixed fragrances  
Disturbing as elusive melody.

Fare down the straight stone walk, time edged,  
betwixt

Tall spires of foxglove, cockscomb, larkspur-plumes—

A lover's lane—hard task it were to tell  
When loveliest (When, Love, are kisses best?)  
Methinks I hear refrains of other years  
Repeated by gay canterbury bells.

"Go gather thou," the Garden-Spirit calls,  
"Here from the love-in-mist, there where the  
first

White petaled aster falls,—go gather thou  
From bursting seed-cups of the gillyflower;  
Pluck bud by bud to where the columbine  
Runs with the periwinkle to the end"—  
A straight stone walk to walk to heaven on!

The day grows darker, dim moths flutter by,  
A faint far cow-bell tinkles o'er the hill,  
And homing doves wheel gently through the  
dusk.

The plain familiar ways grow strange, remote;  
A face upon an urn smiles wickedly;  
Footsteps evade, a robin hurtles by;  
The Rose of Sharon winks an hundred eyes,  
And four-o'clocks put out shy hands to me.  
A moon-flower world lit by pale cosmos stars,  
Mysterious, inviolate, serene,  
Where tremulous and hushed the Garden waits  
Sleep and the brooding presence of the night.  
I stray as some lost wraith of memory,  
The Garden but a Derelict of Dreams.



## AUGUST

FROM corn-crib by the level pasture-lands  
To knoll where spruce and boulders hide the  
road

I know it like a book, and when my heart  
Is waste and dry and hard and choked with  
weeds,

I come here till it gently blooms again.  
For gardens yield rich fruits that will outlast  
The autumn and the winter of the soul,  
Richest to him who toils with loving hands.  
'Tis delving thus we learn life's secrets told  
But to those favoured few who dig for them.  
The Garden is an intimate and keeps  
In touch with us, yet hath its own high moods,  
And doth impose them on the mind of man  
To shame his pettiness. So do I love  
Its shimmering August mood keyed to the sun,  
A harlequin of colour, birds and bloom.  
Nasturtiums, zinnias, balsams, salvias blaze  
By vivid dahlias; tiger-lilies burn  
In scarlet shadow of Jerusalem-cross;  
Beyond the queen-hydrangeas splendid rule  
Barbaric marigolds; chrysanthemums  
Outshine gladioli, and sunflowers flaunt  
Their crests of gold beneath the giant gourds.  
Within the arbor, script forgot, I muse,  
While gorgeous hollyhocks sway to and fro  
To mark the silences, and butterflies

Flit in and out like some bright memory,  
And blinding poppies kindle slow watch-fires  
Before the golden altar of the sun.

A spell lies on the Garden. Summer sits  
With finger on her lips as if she heard  
The steps of Autumn echo on the hill.  
A hush lies on the Garden. Summer dreams  
Of timid crocus thrust through drifted snow.

## ENVOI

Go to the Garden, Friend! Down any path  
Thou mayst come face to face with thine own  
soul;  
Round any turn thou mayst find God's foot-  
steps  
After the royal revels of the rain.  
Go to the Garden—Eden waits for thee—  
Yet mayhap thou wilt find Gethsemane.



## The Aged Christ

Not the real Christ of my faith and yours, but a dream  
Christ this, cast upon the curtain of my mind by the  
human figure men talk about today.

# The Aged Christ

## SCENE I

*Under the olive trees at sunset near highroad to temple.* CHRIST; PETER; CHORUS.

CHORUS. As long ago with psalm and rite  
We walked beside the Lord of Light,  
So now His hurried day is o'er  
Up to The City as before  
We pilgrims journey year by year—  
Ye heavenly powers, heed and hear.  
To Christ in Heaven do we sing.  
Blow trumps! Sweet harps and timbrels  
bring!  
With gifts and gleanings in our hands  
Give praise to Him who understands.  
Hail! Hail! Hail!

(CHRIST and PETER *withdrawing from throng.*)

PETER. Thou art weary, Lord, rest here and  
watch.

CHRIST. Alas! They knew not I was in the  
crowd.  
They see, they recognize me now no more.

PETER. My heart is sore with Thy most grievous hurt,  
And what to do I know not. Yet again  
I beg Thee, Master, show Thyself in power.  
Do miracles, stretch forth Thy hand and heal.

CHRIST (*aside*). Oft have I marveled at those miracles!

PETER. Bid cripples walk. Command the deaf to hear.  
Be seen within the Temple as of old  
Clothed in authority, dispensing alms.  
Once more speak parables to catch men's hearts.  
Claim Thou again Thy sovereignty with God.

CHRIST. Hush, Peter, nay—I can scarce bear to hear  
Of those rash things. How dared I to believe  
I, I alone, held God's torch to the world?  
How bold my boyish faith to dream such dreams!  
I one with God! (*Aside.*) Yet am I glad I dreamed.

PETER. Nay, Master, nay—I feel the miracles  
In mine own life. It was no idle dream  
For which I gave my highest soul to Thee.

Thine own disciples testify the truth,  
And even without Thee, carry on Thy work.

CHRIST. You mean?

PETER. I mean Thy Gospel to the world  
Hath now gone out beyond control of Thee,  
And like a seed, forgotten, yieldeth fruit  
A thousand fold in other climes and lands.  
'Tis Thine no more, but as a mighty sea  
It rolls to distant shores, by unknown ways.

CHRIST. Strange, strange! And I? They care  
for me no more.

(*Aside.*) I tax myself that I do notice it.  
Yet say you, that they magnify my name?

PETER. Even as one arisen from the dead.

CHRIST. And did that last wild cry upon the  
cross  
Not harm the cause? (*Aside.*) Before I dared  
not ask.

PETER. Nay, Lord, they thought the human  
heart of thee  
But called in passing anguish unto God.

CHRIST. My quivering agony as nothing was  
To that sharp sword of shame with which I  
pierced  
Mine own most bleeding breast. It was the  
end.



Healed now my wounds, my body wholly  
healed,  
While that mad cry is as a broken blade  
Rusting within the fibres of my soul.

PETER (*with tears*). Dear Saviour, it was long  
ago—forget!

CHRIST. I knew not, Peter, I was but a man  
Until that last blind hour upon the cross.  
Even Gethsemane revealed it not.  
Though driven to bay I wept, I sweated  
blood,  
I did not understand. Yet strangely since  
Through all these after years, come fleeting  
hints,  
Obscure, disquieting, bewildering,  
That manhood—yea, this common human-  
ness—  
Is greater than that young divinity.

PETER. Dear Christ, Thou art for ever Lord  
to me.

CHRIST. Was it but youth's way to proclaim,  
to share  
The kindling truth which lit my flaming soul?

PETER. We saw the glory, Lord, when Thou  
didst speak.

CHRIST. How strong I was in those exalted days!

My youth was as a lash to flay the law,  
A bugle to bring down the walls which time  
Had hardly builded in a thousand years.  
Believing all, it all things wrought, and more.  
And virtue I knew not went forth from me.  
Peter, I do confess, I did not know  
How overwhelming was the truth I preached.  
Greater it was than I, its instrument.

PETER. I love Thee, Lord, but yet I cannot grasp

All Thou dost mean. Dear Lord, Thou  
growest old.

Infirmity hath come upon Thee. See of late  
How silver-white Thy hair, how slow Thy  
step!

'Tis well that John doth guard Thee as a son  
For I am come to take farewell of Thee.  
Even as Thou didst bid by Galilee  
I go to preach Thy Gospel to the world.

CHRIST. 'Twas long ago.

PETER. Vivid I see Thee yet,  
So clear, I may no longer dwell with Thee  
Here in this blest obscurity. I go  
To Rome.

CHRIST. To Rome!

PETER. Yea, even unto Death.

CHRIST. For me?

PETER. For Thee, yet even more for him,  
My brother, Thou of old didst bid me love  
More than myself.

CHRIST. I seem to know the words.  
They come to me from those fine, high,  
young days  
When I believed all things and all things  
wrought.  
(*Peter kneels.*) Kneel now to me no more,  
kneel thou to God.

PETER. Thy blessing, Lord, that I may die as  
Thou.

CHRIST. Nay, ask no blessing, save of an old  
man,  
Who humbly strives to equal thy dear faith.  
Oh Peter, give me back some little part  
Of my old faith in mine own lost Christhood.  
God I believe—help Thou mine unbelief!

PETER. Farewell, dear Christ, I go to feed Thy  
lambs.

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Farewell, dear Christ, I go to feed Thy  
lambs.

Farewell, my Lord, I go to feed Thy sheep.

CHRIST (*unconsciously blesses Peter*).

Even unto Death, farewell, depart in peace.

SCENE II

*Jesus' home. Rough pillars about courtyard.  
Trellis of grapevines to right. Water bottles and  
spring boughs of blossoms to left.*

JOHN; BEGGAR.

BEGGAR. Where is the Christ who healeth?  
Where is He?

JOHN. He is asleep.

BEGGAR. Of old ye spake not thus.  
I am come far, an-hungred and in pain.  
Through years have I come seeking, seeking  
Him.  
Does He turn me away? Then is no hope  
In heaven or earth. Asleep while cripples  
cry?  
Asleep while those who ask, receive it not?  
Asleep while those who seek Him, find Him  
not?  
Asleep while those who knock, are turned  
away?  
Then, Sir, He is no longer Him I sought.

JOHN. The Christ is old and spent, and mine  
own power

## The Aged Christ

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Hath passed. So get thee gone, poor broken one.

Yet stay, an alms—here is a flower He loved.

BEGGAR. Could I but see His face, I should be whole,

For I recall how as a shrunken child

I saw Him feed the hungry multitude,

But no one took me near Him to be cured.

I slept beside the gate of Jericho

When Jesus passed. Though I have waited months

Beside that gate He never came again!

And when within the Synagogue He healed

The withered hand, we others came too late.

Now am I turned away! It cannot be!

Oh Sir, let me but look upon His face!

JOHN (*aside*). He begs, as all of us, a miracle.

Too late it is. Go thou, He heals no more.

BEGGAR. Let Him but say, "Forgiven," and I am whole.

JOHN. Why man, 'tis twenty years since He hath taught.

I dare not say how many since He healed.

But stay—He comes—the Christ.

BEGGAR (*with hand upon his beating heart*).

I know His step.

## The Aged Christ

(*Enter Christ.*)

CHRIST. Who seeks me? In my sleep I felt the  
cry  
Of some poor needy one who called on me.

BEGGAR. Jesus, I come to Thee, bid me arise.

JOHN. Go man, no more.

CHRIST. Come near, I cannot see.  
Give me thy hand. What, man, dost thou  
believe?

BEGGAR. Even as once of old Thou hast the  
power  
To make me whole. (*Suddenly he leaps up  
cured.*) Hail Christ! I walk, I walk!

JOHN (*aside*). A miracle! I would that Peter  
saw!  
How pale Thou art, oh Christ!

CHRIST. I had forgot  
What strength it took (*drooping*). And yet  
I do not know  
Whether 'twas his belief, or mine own power.  
I do distrust myself—half frightened am  
To feel divinity stir once again  
Within my feeble frame. Is it come back?

JOHN. Tax not Thyself, dear Lord. (*Aside.*)

How weak He is!

We love Thee, Master, let Thy Christhood go

Even as one who puts his mantle by.

Rest Thou as doth the labourer after toil.

I love Thee, Master, lean on me and rest.

(*Both walk slowly into house.*)

BEGGAR (*singing*).

My distresses touched the skies,

Heard my cries.

Suppliant and weak I kneeled,

Thou hast healed.

Now I praise with flying feet,

Glad and fleet.

As a god, I swiftly race

By Thy grace.

As in dreams I skip along,

Straight and strong.

Sure of foot as mountain sheep,

Fearless leap.

Dance and run in holy glee,

Praising Thee.

(*CHILDREN run from all directions, attracted as always by joy, skipping sympathetically with the BEGGAR.*)

CHILDREN. Hail! Hail!

BEGGAR. Hail! Hail! Hail!

(*Exeunt.*)



### SCENE III

*The same. Twilight skies. A few sharp stars shining through portal.*

CHRIST; JOHN.

JOHN (*with scroll*). Where were we Lord?

CHRIST. "I saw a great white throne,  
And Him that sat thereon." Read it again.

JOHN (*reads*). "I saw the holy city coming  
down."

CHRIST. How have I prayed for this!

JOHN (*reads*). "The Lamb is light  
Thereof, and savèd nations walk therein.  
His name upon their foreheads shall be writ,  
And they shall see His face."

CHRIST. Shall see His face!  
I would I too at Patmos dreamed such dreams.  
'Tis as I turned the page of mine own heart.  
Hark!

JOHN. I hear nought.

CHRIST. Read on.

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JOHN. "And God shall wipe  
Away all tears. There shall be no more  
Death."

CHRIST. Hark!

JOHN. Oft these seven days Thou listenest  
thus.

CHRIST. Ill news precedes itself, and griefs  
forecast  
Shadows upon the mantle of my mind.  
(*Suddenly shrinking.*) At last!

(*Enter MESSENGER, panting.*)

MESSENGER. For Christ—a missive come  
from Rome.

JOHN (*reads*). A missive come from Rome—  
from Barnabas!  
Peter, my Lord, Peter—

CHRIST. Peter is dead!

JOHN. Crucified.

CHRIST. Crucified even as I.

JOHN. Nay, Lord,  
With head reversed, as one unfit to die  
As died his Lord.

(JOHN, bowed in grief, glances anxiously from time to time at CHRIST.)

CHRIST (*speaking as to one unseen*).

Yea, even unto Death—  
For Thee—my brother— 'Twas by Galilee—  
Thy Gospel hath burst bounds, I go with it.  
Oh Peter, Son, yea, even unto Death!  
I would I could have drunk this cup for thee!

JOHN. It reads, he gladly died, accounting it  
Exceeding joy to suffer as his Lord.

CHRIST. He gave no cry, as I, upon his cross?

JOHN. The script is brief—there is no word of  
it.

CHRIST. Yea, even unto Death! It is too late,  
Too late! Too late! I cannot raise him now  
As once I wakened Lazarus from Death.

(*Silence for a little space.*)

Thy servant groweth old, and must give  
place.

I can no longer guide my children's steps,  
Or shield, or serve, or give my life for them.  
Others must lead them when they blindly  
stray,  
Another teach them, love them, lift them up.  
I may not feel the warmth of their new day,

Nor see the fruitage of my love for them.  
Even as John the Baptist passed, I pass.  
One mightier, whose fan is in His hand,  
Winnows the world. I, set aside, must  
watch

My children die, martyred as I. Oh God,  
I knew not that it meant these bitter things—  
This tide I started with my hot young words.  
Where will it end, oh Father, where and  
when?

*(Silence.)*

I cannot see the future, it is hid.  
I am nought save an old spent dying man.  
My Christhood Thou hast taken, Thou who  
gav'st.

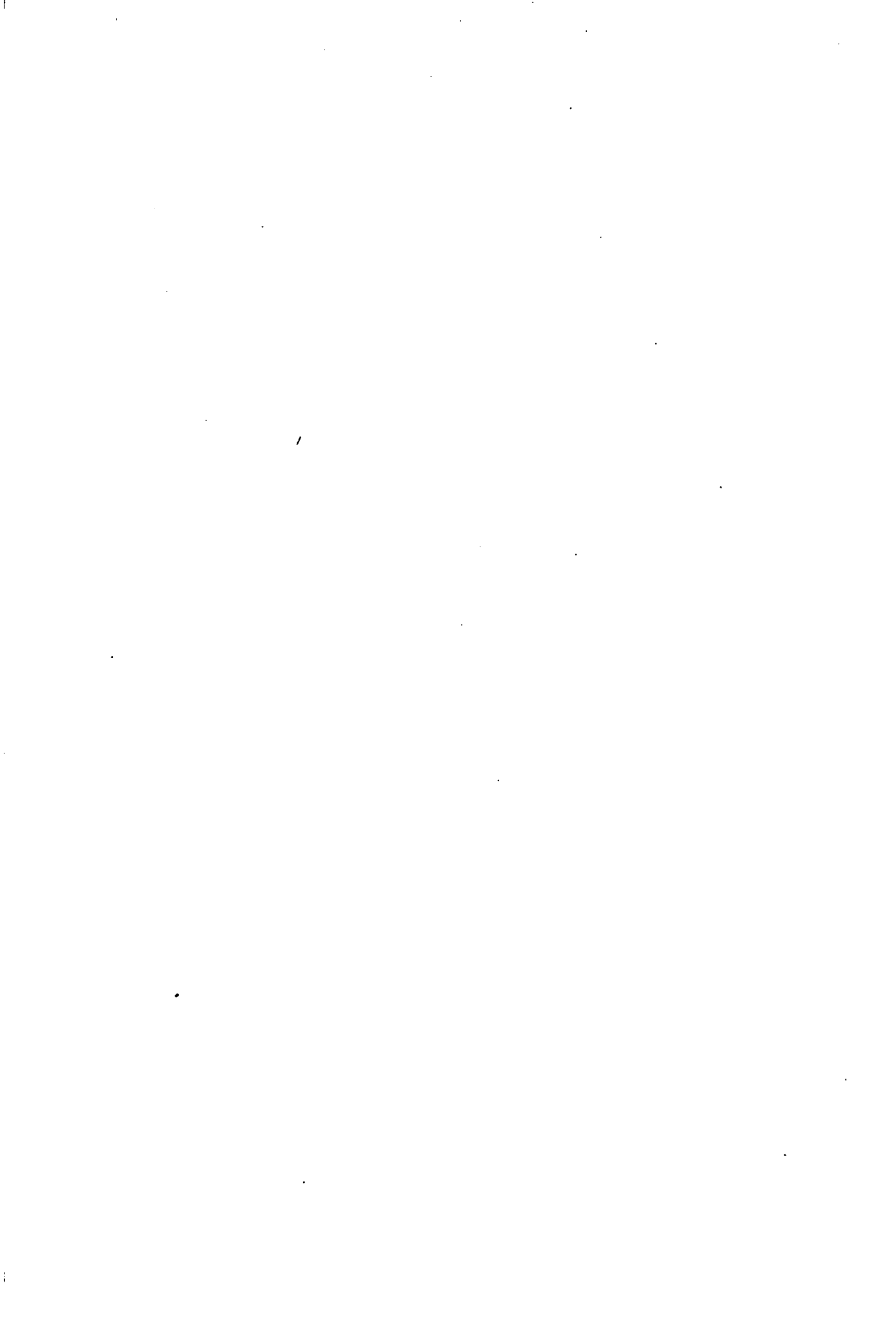
Yet still Thou art my Father, I Thy son,  
And Christ, or man, only one prayer I know,  
Father in Heaven, Let Thy Kingdom come.

FINIS.











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